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Alex Lyon: Immigration – A Matter of Principle

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End-Game in Ulster

British policy towards Northern Ireland often seems to resemble a deadly game of 'Consequences'. That is to say, the intentions of all parties are deliberately dissembled or kept secret. Once unfolded, the most striking suggestions will stand out. At best, they might even form a consistent whole which no other method could have achieved. It is in such a ploy that the Secretary for Northern Ireland appears presently to be involved.

There are several possible interpretations of Mr Rees's current policy of 'Ulsterisation'. In a recent statement to the House of Commons, he described his paramount aim as being 'to restore the primacy of the police and to achieve the progressive reduction of the armed forces as soon as possible'. Already 1,300 troops have been withdrawn. Mr Rees has repeatedly justified this by claiming that violence in the province in recent months has become increasingly criminal, rather than political, in its motivation. From this belief it follows that the people best equipped to deal with such crimes are the police. At Westminster this may sound like the wholly desirable start to a process of restoring normality to the streets of Northern Ireland. Less so, perhaps, in Belfast or Derry. Whatever the fringes of gangsterism and derangement on both sides, the central motivation remains what it has always been: for the Provisional IRA, to destroy the Northern Irish state and the link with Britain; for the Loyalists, to defend it.

This needs restating because the most charitable interpretation of Mr Rees's actions currently being mooted in Northern Ireland is that he is trying to pressurise the politicians there into finding a solution, by convincing them that this time he really *is* preparing for British withdrawal. Mr Rees himself vehemently denies that a pull-out is on the cards. But what he, or indeed any other British minister, says about government policy in Northern Ireland is treated there with the greatest suspicion by both sides. Lacking any more persuasive reason for the present policy, such disparate political enemies as Paddy Devlin of the SDLP and Ernest Baird of the Loyalist coalition have reached similar conclusions. If Rees (Part One) fails, and the long-desired settlement is still not forthcoming by the end of the summer, they believe that Rees (Part Two) will be put into effect. Once the army's responsibility for security has been drastically reduced, the Secretary for Northern Ireland at the time (whether or not it is Mr Rees) will then be in a much better position to announce withdrawal.

But since all the players have now guessed the end-game, Mr Rees's policy of Ulsterisation, as it stands, seems set for failure. The crucial role of the Royal Ulster Constabulary is still unresolved. For the Protestants, the RUC has always been the first line in the defence of the state. For the Catholics, it represents an essential part of the apparatus built to uphold Protestant supremacy. Of course many Catholics deeply disapprove of the IRA and long to see the normal processes of law and order restored to their communities. But this is far from saying they want the RUC back as lawkeepers. As always in Northern Ireland, this attitude has its mirror image. The death of a single policeman at the hands of the IRA always angers the Protestants more than any number of casualties among British soldiers. The killing of more police, including unarmed young women, seems inevitable.

So, too, do the repercussions. But even when given the likely scenario for sectarian confrontation following his latest move Mr Rees says he cannot be deterred from what his security advisers tell him. (In Ulster there is naturally bitter speculation that these advisers are mainly British Army officers.) So the IRA talks of a 'long hot summer' and the Loyalists of 'immediate steps to save our province'. Meanwhile Mr Rees pursues his secret diplomacy with the Provisionals. But secrecy has always been a proven failure when it comes to Northern Ireland; now it is a deadly failure. If Mr Rees has constructed a policy for his province, he should say so now – not when a score or a hundred more people have been killed. If he has not, perhaps the time has come for him to admit the fact, whether privately or publicly, and request an honourable discharge from his duties.

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Spotlight on Politics

James Fenton

Is It a Bomb or a Dinosaur?

I had occasion this week to put a little strain on public nervousness when I purchased a dinosaur – to be precise, a styracosaurus, in a reptile-green plastic snap-together assembly kit. I had to carry the thing around with me in its box, wrapped up for presentation, and it was remarkable how many times, before I got home, I was questioned as to what the box contained. At one point, a whole crowded saloon bar fell silent as I went in, and all eyes followed the package. I placed it carefully on the bar. 'Don't be alarmed,' I said, 'it's not a bomb, it's a dinosaur.' And as I delivered this peculiar reassurance, and the pub resumed its normal transactions, I thought how vigilant London had become, and how much people's reactions had been nervously attuned for the worst.

A politician who calls for a debate on immigration will be treated by his colleagues in very much the same way as the man who brings the parcel into the pub. What Jonathan Aitken did on Monday was to walk into the pub, place the box on the bar, say 'You should open that and do something about it', turn on his heels and walk smartly out again. Everyone is very nervous about what the box contains, and most people, whatever their public utterances, believe that it contains a bomb. It is said that the Conservatives, when Aitken chose his subject for debate, put pressure on him to make his motion non-controversial. This has also been strenuously denied – there was a lot of huffing and puffing from William Whitelaw when Enoch Powell congratulated Aitken on having resisted pressure to leave off immigration. It is also said that, by the end of the debate, Aitken was more than a little shamefaced at the way it had gone. Whatever happened, of course, it was impossible to conduct a non-controversial debate about immigration and emigration.

Nor do I think that this was what Aitken wanted. His views on the 'changing demographic character of Great Britain', soberly delivered by a man who looks like every Tory mother's idea of a favourite son, have a certain apocalyptic character. The delivery is sober but the images tend to be riotous: the East African Asians are 'living on borrowed time on the edge of political volcanoes'; there is a danger that Britain may be 'sleepwalking into a sea-change of our national character'; the relatively tranquil pasture of racial tolerance has been transformed into 'a dry and brittle scrubland of tension'; Aitken invoked Macaulay's image of the traveller from New Zealand standing on a broken arch of London Bridge sketching the ruins of St Paul's Cathedral. If so many of the British middle classes are emigrating every year, and so many Asians coming in, what will become of Britain? 'Imagine our shame as parliamentarians if, when our grandchildren were to ask us: "What did you say in the House of Commons about the revolutionary demographic changes which began altering the face of Britain in the last quarter of the 20th century?", we as retired old men had to reply: "We said nothing much".'

Beneath this disingenuous rhetoric, the unlikely image of lisping grandchildren talking of revolutionary demographic changes, lies a question for here and now: the question Aitken poses is – what do we tell our constituents when they say that the wogs are taking over? Because they *are*, aren't they? And people don't like it. They don't believe the Home Office figures, they don't believe that enough is being done to stop illegal immigration, and they bitterly resent the creation of the ghettos and the drain on the welfare state. The case of the £600-a-week hotel has exacerbated things recently, but the resentment is there anyway. And it's growing, isn't it?

That was the implication of Aitken's, and the burden of Powell's, speech. The immediate reaction of a liberal politician is to say – no, the public can be roused into resentment if you insist on making these speeches, and picking the scab on the wound. In fact matters are much better under control than that. There is statistical evidence to prove the liberal point. The latest Gallup figures, for instance, on the supposed causes of increased crime and violence indicate that most people place the blame elsewhere. They are worried about the general breakdown of law and order, the laws being too lenient, the bad example set by parents, and the use of drugs. To a lesser extent, they blame poverty and poor housing, the media, the troubles in Ireland and youthful rebellion. At the bottom of the list comes the conflict between blacks and whites: 14 per cent think it very important (as opposed to 16 per cent in 1973), 25 per cent think it fairly important and 48 per cent think that it has little importance. The rest don't know.

And yet, however the problem may be conceived in the country at large, the Powell thesis is not affected. To Powell, it is essential to look at the areas in question, the 'places where it is a terror to be obliged to live'. You don't find it in the national papers, you find it in the local papers, and even then you only find it by reading between the lines. It is part of the spine-chilling attraction of Powell that he is able to suggest a conspiracy, appeal to those in the know – those who are really suffering – and then triumphantly back it all up by casting the official evidence in the teeth of those in authority. His production of the Hawley report in Monday's debate was a masterstroke. It sent the front bench and the civil servants into a flurry. And it gave a spurious justification by association to his (otherwise unsupported) thesis that the whole thing would end in armed conflict. As ever, his words were carefully chosen, and the desired effect was achieved.

But it will be interesting to see whether Powell as UUUC member for Down, South will command anything like the same respect as he did when Tory Member for Wolverhampton, South West. For if the Powell thesis depends upon the possession of facts which the newspapers are not printing, and upon intimate experience of the black ghetto areas, how come Powell is still in the privileged position of Cassandra on the subject? The only example Powell gave on Monday of a news item from a local Birmingham paper concerned a story which had been widely reported in the national press and, as he admitted, on television. Perhaps he is losing his touch. Perhaps somebody should take over his brief. What about Robert Mellish, for instance? Mellish is much less intelligent than Powell, but he's better placed to play the role of 'enemy within'. Pig-headed 'common sense', boundless self-regard, an unerring instinct for prejudice – yes, these are reasonable qualifications for the job, and he's a former Chief Whip, to boot. He already has a slogan to his name – 'Enough is enough'. A large number of his colleagues are wishing that he'd been kept in the Government after all. At least he would have had to keep his trap shut, they say.

Let us suppose that Powell's thesis is true, and that there is going to be violence in the ghettos. What follows? According to Powell 'there will be feverish endeavour to find methods to allay the supposed grievances which lie behind the violence'. Note the use of the word supposed – as if the violence will not stem from real grievances. And by that time it will be too late. But Powell does not say, and nor do Aitken or Mellish, what should now be done *in the ghettos* themselves to prevent this happening. Research on the inner cities was begun under the Tories, and has been shelved by Labour. The two people now pressing for a concerted attack on the problem are – Alex Lyon and Peter Walker. Their views on the matter seem almost identical: they want a massive effort to remedy the situation now, before Powell's prophecies are proved correct. They acknowledge that such a programme would be electorally unpopular, but are convinced that in the long term it is more than justified. They want to attack the problem at root. How odd that both of them are now out in the cold.

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Alex Lyon

Immigration: A Matter of Principle

Immigration – or rather black immigration – is an emotive subject and the prevailing wisdom is that it is better not to talk about it. If the issues were better understood much of the emotion would be diffused. My case is that large-scale immigration is drawing to an end and it is in everybody's interest that the final commitments are honoured quickly.

This proposition has now been attacked in the debate in the House of Commons and in the Foreign Office report of Mr Donald Hawley which was leaked to Mr Enoch Powell. This form of publication of confidential reports makes it difficult for the impartial observer to make a judgment but I have issued a report of my visit to the Indian sub-continent in order that they can be compared. Basically the approach of Mr Powell and Mr Hawley reflects the emotionalism of the officer conducting interviews in the sub-continent. I do not doubt that there is great pressure to come from people who will never be entitled to enter, or that some degree of evasion and fraud takes place. But any immigration system devised will always risk a measure of evasion.

The level of bogus claims in the sub-continent has to be set against the misery and distress of those who are entitled to come and will come in due course. For, make no mistake, no British government can renege on the two outstanding commitments we have – for reasons I shall try to explain. The argument is not about whether they should come. It is about how long it will take to wind up these commitments.

We should remember also that we are talking not about cold figures but about human beings. When I am told that it is better in the interests of race relations to take ten years rather than three to end our commitments, I remember the thousands of people I have met here or in the sub-continent whose family life will be blighted by that decision. Many of them are now British citizens in the fullest possible sense. I can only hope that if the campaign which I am now waging is not successful, then one of those citizens will take this country to the European court for what is a clear dereliction of our obligations under the Convention of Human Rights.

People came from the Commonwealth because they had the right to enter as citizens. No British government adopted a deliberate policy to encourage immigration but none followed the invariable practice of other Commonwealth countries in defining their own citizenship. The Government is now doing that for the first time in our history. Thereafter our immigration law can be overhauled so that all non-British citizens are treated on the same impartial and non-racial basis.

But recent history has left us with two commitments which all the political parties recognise that we must discharge. First, a number of our citizens of the United Kingdom and colonies are being forced to leave East Africa. Most of them have been Asians, but Europeans have come from Kenya and Tanzania and there are some 150,000 entitled to come from Rhodesia. We undertook to take them if they were displaced and successive British governments have repeated that we stand by our word.

Quite apart from the moral obligation, the European Commission has ruled that we also have a legal duty to admit them. There are still 40,000 Asians in East Africa who are entitled to come. This Government increased the annual allocation of family vouchers to 5,000 and they are now being admitted at the rate of 20,000 a year so

'You are going to meet between 50,000 and 70,000 dark strangers.'

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that the commitment should be met by 1979.

A great many are traders and professional men who have brought financial resources as well as skills with them. But the original allocation of vouchers was so small that many had to live on their savings for long periods after they were refused permission to work. These unemployed queues have now ended in Kenya, Tanzania and Zambia as a result of increasing the number of vouchers. But there were still 400 unemployed families in Malawi in December. A very small number of these have arrived here destitute in the last few months and considerable publicity has been given to half-a-dozen cases. These should be seen against the many thousands of families who have settled here with no difficulty. Even these small problems would have been overcome if the Government had been prepared to maintain a small resettlement camp.

The second commitment is to the wives and children of men who settled here before 1973. The 1971 Immigration Act gave them a statutory right to come and it would be unthinkable that we would prevent the uniting of a family where the man had settled here. In any case the European Convention on Human Rights would have prevented such uncivilised behaviour. But the admission system is so time-consuming and difficult that our undertaking has been broken. In 1968 the law was changed to require entry certificates for families. These can only be obtained from the British High Commission and only after an interview. There is very little documentation in the sub-continent to prove deaths, births and marriages so it is sometimes difficult to establish relationships. The entry certificate officers question the wives, their children and their friends to decide whether they are telling the truth.

Longer Interviews

Over the years since 1969 these interviews have become more protracted so that the rate for each officer has dropped. In 1970, 26,000 were interviewed but the number dropped each year until only 13,000 cases were processed in 1974. Although the number of applications also dropped each year, the decline was less so that the queues built up; when Labour came back to office in 1974 wives were waiting up to seven years before getting their certificates.

The difficulty is that in the Asian extended family a man may feel an equal responsibility to a relative as to his immediate family and may claim a closer relationship in order to bring them to Britain. There is a risk of abuse therefore, particularly for teenage children, but the degree of scrutiny of bona fide applicants has now reached the absurd. Many applicants are illiterate; some have never been outside their village; some are still in purdah. They and particularly their children are often confused by the inquisition of a European in his own office far from their home. They do not understand the officer; he does not understand them. The situation is pregnant with difficulty. As I said in the report of my visit to the sub-continent:

> The system has become rigid because we have become preoccupied with the elimination of doubt about discrepancies which may be caused by genuine errors or the difficulty of translating the facts of an actual situation in the village to the different atmosphere of a High Commission Office many miles and a whole culture away.

To make matters worse, the officials were using the criminal standard of proof until my visit in 1975. This meant that if they had any doubt the application was rejected. In Dacca the whole family was refused if one child was suspect. The Divisional Court in 1972 decided that the civil standard of proof should apply to immigration cases but the ruling had no effect in practice.

Official Barrier

The real barrier is the concern of officials to keep down the number of entrants. The right exists only for a limited number. In theory the figure can be computed by counting the Asian men who settled before 1973 and deducting the number of families who have been admitted. In practice it is difficult to be precise but the best estimate is about 100,000 and probably less. It is in all our interests that the families are reunited as quickly as possible. New settlers cannot be expected to commit themselves wholly to this country if they are preoccupied with their families abroad. The children have a better chance of adjusting to our society if they spend a longer time in our schools. And it is about time that the sterile argument about immigration was brought to an end.

Civil servants cannot be expected to appreciate these policy considerations. They see a lot of people coming forward for interview and the queue seems endless. They even go so far as to admit that if they could be persuaded that the pool is finite they would be prepared to cooperate in expediting the interviews. I think it is for the politicians to say now that this queue is a national disgrace which must be ended as quickly as possible. They will only do that when there is greater public understanding of the iniquity of the system. If nothing is done the queue will continue for many years with all the consequent human distress.

If we put more staff on the work, it would cost £2m. a year to reduce the delays to six months. That sum was refused in 1974 but the Government is now considering an interim scheme for extending child tax allowances for the children we are keeping out by our delays which will cost £36m. a year for five years. I would prefer to spend the money on ending the queue.

The other alternative is to use the existing staff but cut down the length of interviews. We had already started on that course and an expedited queue for families with no teenage children has been notably successful. Without any increase in staff we could get the families in much more quickly if we told the officials that it was more important to consider the interests of the genuine dependants than to find the odd bogus applicant. Even now only 15 per cent are rejected after the time-consuming exercise. I am convinced that many of these are genuine, but even if they were all fraudulent it would mean admitting 15,000 in order to end the misery for 85,000 wives and children.

Admitting the Old

There are three other minor but important changes which need immediate attention before the review of immigration law is complete. West Indians, in particular, suffer from the application of the 'sole responsibility' rule. This was introduced in 1968 to prevent Asian men from bringing over only their sons so that there was no female presence in the home. Under the rule a single parent in this country who wishes to bring her child must show that she had the sole responsibility for the child or that family considerations make exclusion undesirable.

Because many parents from the West Indies are unmarried and the traditional practice has been to leave the child with grandparents or other relatives, this rule hits them far harder than any other group. Even though the parent has been separated from the child for many years, the refusal to allow them to be reunited causes deep despair. Since the total number of children involved is only 4,000, who might be expected to arrive over a period of five years, it is inhuman not to remove this distress. It could be done easily by certifying that it was always undesirable to keep a mother from her child.

Secondly, many Asian families are deeply concerned about the fate of their parents in old age. They are quite willing to maintain them fully without recourse to the state. At present the parents cannot be admitted if they are under 65 or have not been wholly or mainly dependent upon the sponsor. I would admit any parent who had completed his working life and had no one to look after him in his own country but who would be fully maintained here by the sponsor.

Finally, a number of children over 18 have been part of the family unit in the country of origin but were prevented from coming with the family because dependent children must not be over 18. There is a limited concession to those between 18 and

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21 but I would extend it to 25 where it can be shown that the child would have remained part of the family in the country of origin and has not set up a family unit of his own.

These three concessions would not add greatly to our immigration commitment and, save for elderly parents, would be completed in a limited period. We now have a million black immigrants in this country who have 750,000 children born here. Waiting to come are 40,000 East African Asians and 100,000 wives and dependants. With the 4,000 West Indian children and the few children over 18, the grand total is about 150,000. Last year we admitted 35,000 Commonwealth citizens for settlement. If we raised the number to 50,000 we could end all large-scale immigration by 1980, when the new immigration law might come into force. Some would still come on work permits or for marriage but the total immigration from the whole of the world would probably fall from the present 70-80,000 a year to 15-20,000.

It is no use talking about improving race relations until this problem is solved. You cannot tell a black man that he is equal in our society if you keep him apart from his family.

Alexander Cockburn

Second Thoughts on Carter

Not so long ago people answering the telephone in Jimmy Carter's headquarters were saying with irritating certainty: 'Jimmy Carter is your next President.' They are not doing that any more. The Democratic Party, just when it seemed to be succumbing virtually without a struggle to Carter's impetuous assaults, is now thrashing about in a flurry of second thoughts.

Not so long ago Carter was confidently predicting victory in Oregon. Instead Senator Frank Church easily won the three-way primary last Tuesday and Governor Jerry Brown actually persuaded one out of every five voters to write his name in on the ballot papers. Church also won in his home state of Idaho, and Brown took Nevada. The Southern states of Arkansas, Tennessee and Kentucky went to Carter by huge margins.

It is not as though thrashing motions by Democratic voters have not been visible since the start of the year. Carter did badly in Massachusetts and New York. All the same the saga commanding general attention between January and the end of April was his sure-footed progress towards the White House. In his wake lay the whited bones of Fred Harris, Sargent Shriver, Birch Bayh, Henry Jackson and, it seemed, Mo Udall. It appeared that Carter had established his consensus and that the Democratic Party was about to accept a conservative Southerner as the nominee.

Now the talk is of turning tides and dramatic reversals. People play the 'if' game with renewed ardour. If Brown wins California, if Udall wins Ohio, if there is an unclear result in New Jersey . . . In these three states important primaries will be held at the start of the second week in June. They mark the close of the primaries. Beset by defeat or reverses, Carter could be moving forward to the convention bereft of his aura of invincibility and no longer immune to the threats of brokered delegates and back-room deals.

Just about the time that Carter's campaign workers were changing their preferred form of greeting on the telephone came Senator Edward Kennedy's famous leak to the *New York Daily News*. According to James Weighart, the *News*'s reporter, Kennedy intimated that he would – contrary to all previous pledges – be prepared to accept a draft at the convention. Weighart added that Kennedy would be prepared to run as vice-president under Hubert Humphrey. Kennedy immediately denied the former, though not the latter intention. Even so, it is generally assumed that Weighart, though known to be sympathetic to the idea of a Kennedy ticket, did not make the whole story up. The question is – what sort of a game is Kennedy playing?

Speculation about the presidential designs of Teddy Kennedy is, of course, a national sport. Certainly, over the last three years, Kennedy was the man against whom Carter was expecting to campaign. At regular intervals the major newspapers dispatched teams of investigative reporters to Chappaquiddick, just to make doubly sure that no one could subsequently complain that Richard Nixon was the only man the liberal media ever bothered to kick around. At equally regular intervals acquaintances of Kennedy would return from sessions with the Senator in either Hyannisport or his office in Washington to confirm that this time around Kennedy was out of it, that the problems of his wife's alcoholism, his son's illness and his mother's anxieties were insuperable deterrents; furthermore, that he was running for re-election as Senator in Massachusetts and that his hope of becoming chairman of the Senate's Judiciary Committee in 1978 was what was mainly on his mind.

Then came Weighart's story. Subsequently Kennedy said that if Carter went into the convention with 1,350 delegates, or even gained this number on the first ballot, he should be accepted as the party's candidate; otherwise the nomination would not have much meaning as an expression of views of the Democratic Party. Now, the votes of 1,505 delegates are actually needed to win the nomination. Kennedy was, therefore, setting Carter a high total – more than the 1,200 commonly accepted as ensuring immediate success. He has also voiced some criticisms of Carter for being 'fuzzy' on the issues, political short-hand for withholding endorsement of the crafty Georgian.

The accepted view is that Kennedy, by seeming to tolerate talk of a vice-presidential spot for him on a Humphrey ticket, was giving Hubert's non-active strategy a helping hand. For the last month supporters of Kennedy have been arguing that Humphrey could never hope to win a brokered convention, that the animus of Carter towards him – and indeed of liberals with memories stretching back to 1968 and beyond – would prove inflexible. In such circumstances Kennedy would become the unifying candidate, the helicopter would snatch him up from Hyannisport, dump him down in Madison Square Garden amid grateful ovations and he would modestly accept the crown. Naturally Kennedy wants to be President, but it still seems fairly clear that he does not think he will win the office this time around. And actually one effect of his leak a few days ago was to make it clearer than they might wish that other liberals in the field – Church and Udall, along with the bizarre Jerry Brown – are only stalking horses. The most ardent publicist of the 'Draft Kennedy' story last week was Carter himself who made the reasonable sugestion to the voters that they might consider whom they were actually voting for in a 'stop Carter' movement.

Despite the fact that both Brown and Church have now won some primaries, and Mo Udall has run Carter close three times, it is almost impossible to find anyone outside their respective entourages who thinks they have the slightest chance of ever winning the nomination. It is, therefore, becoming plain that quite a substantial hunk of Democratic voters will do almost anything to stop Carter. The interesting question is why this aversion has suddenly become so manifest.

First, there is a matter of time-lag, Carter has been under assault since the start of the year for being – as I mentioned earlier – 'fuzzy' on the issues. This is the charge that all his opponents level against him. It is the one endlessly debated in the press and on television. Its effect can now be detected in the attrition of his support. In fact the accusation, in many ways, has become somewhat unfair. Carter is very specific on a number of issues. It is just that the specificity often shows him to be of conservative disposition. He has expressed his dislike of forced bussing, his preference for injection of capital into the private sector to reduce unemployment, his caution about the likelihood of large cuts in the defence budget, his dislike of abortion, his reluctance to promise huge federal relief to the cities.

On top of this there is the matter of

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media overkill. Carter has been on the covers of both *Newsweek* and *Time* at least four times. His smile has gleamed from television screens for the past five months. He is no longer the plucky outsider from the Deep South but a familiar figure on the national scene. He is practically, in this odd speed-up, 'another tired old face', to be abandoned by the voters searching for novelty in the form of someone like Jerry Brown.

And Brown, in particular, has trumped him in the modalities of soft-core charisma. Carter's brew has been religiosity and love, repeated assertions that Americans have nothing to be sorry about and indeed abundant cause for self-congratulation. Brown, as suits the prophet of lowered expectations, has managed to get by on even less. He has not, so far as I am aware, made one coherent statement about foreign policy, about defence spending or indeed about the domestic economy, beyond ritual calls for full employment. As he himself has said: 'In this business a little vagueness goes a long way.' Brown is at least as conservative as Carter in many ways. But there is one essential difference between the two. Carter does frighten people. Brown, slighter and less consequential, does not.

Such disquiet and second thoughts may all be too late. Carter already has over 800 delegates. By the end of the primary season he will have over 1,000. He may be facing resistance from advocates of Kennedy or Humphrey, and from the delegates of Udall, Brown and Church. But Carter has only to make deals with Jackson, Wallace and Mayor Daley (the sponsor of Adlai Stevenson III) to win their delegates to push him over the top. He is still the front-runner, even though the central question over the next few months, and possibly over the next four years, may be how on earth this ever came to pass.

New York

John Griffith

Silk's Purse, Sow's Ear

If we seriously intend to reform our system of raising local revenue, some kind of local income tax is inevitable as I have already argued in these columns (NEW STATESMAN 6 December 1974). But the heart of the report* of the Layfield Committee, chaired by a well-known 'silk', lies elsewhere. This is one of those big reports, nearly 500 pages, with volumes of evidence to come later. It is very well put together and is written in the English language with little gobble-de-gook and only the occasional reference to local authorities fulfilling the wishes of the electorate and suchlike. (I assume that the acceptance without comment of What the White Papers Say – that governments wish to give local authorities more autonomy – is intended as a pleasantry to lighten the burden of reading an unavoidably heavy analysis.)

The heart of the report lies in its examination of the relationship between central departments and local authorities. It sees the alternatives as being between 'either adopting a financial system which frankly recognises a need for strong central direction, or taking positive steps to increase the ability of local authorities to manage local affairs'. It plumps for the latter. Why?

There are two possible ways of choosing. One is to make certain assumptions about our form of government, our political philosophy, our life style even, and to apply those as Procrustes used to, by chopping off and stretching so as to make solutions fit the assumptions. The other is to look at the political and economic conditions and the constraints within which the whole body politic operates, and then to adopt a system of local government finance which fits those facts and the likely facts of the future.

I was surprised that this report chose to proceed from assumptions. The committee had seemed to be harder-headed than, say, the Redcliffe-Maud lot but the latter came up with a more realistic set of recommendations. Its assumptions are two both doubtful and quite unsafe to build on. The first is stated thus, under the heading Requirements of a Financial System:

> The first requirement in a democratic society is that the government, whether central or local, should be accountable to the electorate.

Then, having said that beneficiaries of services and taxpayers have different interests at different times, the report continues:

> These conflicting interests can only be satisfactorily reconciled if whoever is responsible for deciding to spend more or less money on providing a service is also responsible for deciding whether to raise more or less taxation.

The first assumption is, to speak mildly, not self-evident. Accountability to the electorate is indeed part of what we often mean when we talk of democracy. But I doubt if it is the *first* requirement of a financial system. More important are soundness and stability, by which I mean that the system cannot easily be weakened or destroyed by events external to itself; and fairness between individuals; and comprehensibility.

The second assumption is even more dubious. It may often be politically desirable that spenders should be responsible for raising the money but that does not reconcile the interests of beneficiaries and taxpayers. The report quotes with approval a description of accountability as the system which comes closest to a person spending his money. This is economic anthropomorphism run wild. But, more importantly, the assumption runs contrary to widespread practice in the public sector, that of the block grant, under which the recipient has freedom to spend within certain broad limits. Those limits may be relatively narrow, as for the National Health Service, or relatively broad, as for the universities. It is also the principle which informs the rate support grant for local authorities. So by making that assumption the Layfield Committee begged three-quarters of the question it was asked and was left only with the minor matter of finding a form of revenue which would enable the spending local authority more nearly to finance itself.

Professor Alan Day, if I understand his note of reservation correctly, was worried by this because he accepted the political fact that the central departments take the important policy decisions and set the standards, thus greatly narrowing the limits within which local authorities can exercise discretion. He therefore tried, being also bound by the two assumptions of accountability and identification, to reach what the report called a Halfway House where the Government would finance its share of decisions and local authorities their share. In fact, if this division were achievable (which I doubt) the house should rather be called Nine-tenths so preponderant would be the Government's share.

The report argues that central control has increased because its grant has increased as a proportion of local authority income. This traditional view is supported by little more than anonymous witnesses chirruping about paying pipers and calling tunes. Is it seriously suggested that if rate support grant were reduced, so would be central control? Why should it? Central control is not exerted through grant. If there were no grant at all government would still be able directly and successfully to insist that local authorities restricted their expenditure. Policy control and financial control have almost nothing to do with the sources of local authority income.

The Ten-tenths solution of course is to give up the pretence that local authorities in the last quarter of this century can regain the independence of more spacious days. That party is over. It is also to give up the pretence that the sources of their income will affect the amount of independence left to them. So why not abandon the whole game of seeking to raise local revenue by methods which are either grossly inequitable (like the present rating system) or expensive and cumbersome (like local income tax)? No doubt the allocation of 100-percent block grant (housing, as now, excepted) would present difficulties though I disagree with the view of the report that it would require the scrutiny and approval of local authority budgets, and I see no reason to suppose the difficulties would be insuperable. The result would be a financial system which, contrary to the two assumptions with which the report saddled itself, would require local authorities to account for the spending of money which they had not, in any part, raised. What's wrong with that?

What's wrong with this report is that it shies away from the economic consequences of central power. As we shall find with devolution, the only alternative to that power is federalism. There are no stopping places – certainly no houses – in between.

*Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Local Government Finance (Chairman, Frank Layfield QC) Smnd. 6453.

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The who's who of what's what.

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A Special Correspondent

India: A Passage from Democracy

'The emergency exists more in the British and American press than in India,' intoned Dr A. R. Baji, the Indian Government's principal information officer. 'I don't know why journalists waste a lot of money touring India. Nothing is happening here.' Then Mr H. Y. Sharda Prasad, Mrs Gandhi's press adviser, strongly urged us to visit Bihar, home state of Mr Jaya Prakash Narayan and, as Mr Prasad put it, 'the so-called cradle of the total revolution that was to have swept the country'. But for Mrs Gandhi and Sanjay (the Prime Minister's son), he added, 'you would not be talking to me at this moment. India would have just gone up in flames.'

Two days later a dozen of us were in Patna, capital of Bihar. The same evening Mrs Gandhi addressed a public rally at the Mahatma Gandhi Grounds which the dutiful press described as 'the biggest ever held in Bihar'. The crowd was certainly large – around 300,000. Mrs Gandhi was at her oratorical best, attacking 'fascist reactionaries who wanted to plunge India in chaos', 'foreign powers who are jealous of our progress in the last ten years', and 'the cowards of the underground who want to destroy me'. I noticed, however, that all the applause emanated from only two sections of the throng. Later, I was told that 100,000 Congress Party volunteers and 3,000 plainclothesmen had been deployed around the platform.

For days government buses had been bringing villagers to Patna to line the streets to welcome Mrs Gandhi and attend her meetings. But what was even more revealing about Mrs Gandhi's nearly year-old 'disciplined democracy' was that almost 8,000 Biharis had been rounded up in the ten days before Mrs Gandhi arrived in Patna, to ensure 'law and order'. They included 80 teachers, 400 students, almost 1,000 followers of J.P., as Narayan is fondly known, and hundreds of other completely harmless men and women who posed no threat to Mrs Gandhi except perhaps for the fact that they do not approve of her police methods. I was told by a Patna University professor that today in Bihar alone there are no fewer than 40,000 political prisoners. One year after the emergency the national total is estimated at 250,000 – including 30,000 arrested in Tamil Nadu State after the opposition Tamil nationalist government was summarily sacked in January, and 15,000 taken into custody in Gujarat State following the toppling of the opposition regime there in March.

Returning to Delhi, I went by train to Agra, home of the Taj Mahal. Journalistically, it was a piece of unexpected luck, for Sanjay Gandhi was there the same day. The whole town had been decorated with bunting and arches. One estimate is that the Uttar Pradesh state government spent £6,000 on reception and security arrangements for the Prime Minister's increasingly ambitious and authoritarian son. Reaching Agra railway station for the return trip to Delhi, I found some 200 handcuffed men squatting in the blazing noonday sun. They had been roped in several times over with about 50 armed policemen guarding them. 'They are anti-social elements,' explained a railway ticket collector. 'Burglars, highway robbers, kidnappers and rascals like them.' Some of the handcuffed prisoners were shouting for water. Two had fainted and were being roughly carried towards a goods wagon as if they were a piece of luggage. Soon a train arrived and all the prisoners were pushed into two carriages which had been already shuttered.

After the prisoners' special steamed out, I had to wait 90 minutes for my train to the capital. The railway ticket collector was more relaxed now. 'Sanjay is the rising star of India,' he said. 'He will be even greater than Jawaharlal Nehru, though he did not go to college.' Then, I switched the conversation to the prisoners we had seen earlier. Were they really criminals? I asked. To me at least some of them had looked bright and decent. 'I am under transfer and will be gone from this horrible place in a day or two,' the railway official said. 'Once I was an active union worker. Now, everything is finished. Tomorrow you may be arrested for snoring loudly or not saluting the district magistrate. The handcuffed men are not criminals. They are political prisoners. The jail in Agra is just too full. They are going to construct a new jail to accommodate 5,000 prisoners, the biggest in the country.' The next morning's *Hindustan Times* of Delhi carried a front-page photograph showing Sanjay Gandhi and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister N. D. Tewari inspecting a model of the proposed jail. The *Times of India* quotes the Home Minister of Madhya Pradesh State, notorious for its ill-treatment of detainees, as saying that the jails have been overcrowded for the 'last few months' and that a short-term solution would be to construct 'open air' prisons. Mrs Gandhi's India is indeed bursting with prisoners.

From his sick-bed in Bombay J.P. has called for peaceful protests on 26 June, the first anniversary of the emergency. He wants people to come out and demand the restoration of civil liberties and an end to press censorship. One senior government official in Delhi expects at least 50,000 people to be arrested all over India on that day. But the problem, as he put it, is where to keep these new critics of the emergency. Some chief ministers are reported to have suggested that, since schools and colleges are closed for the summer vacation, they could be used as temporary jails. But other chief ministers have pointed out that many schools are already being used to store grain because of the shortage of godowns. A knowledgeable Opposition politician claims that a solution has almost been reached. This is to release as many convicted criminals as possible to make room for political dissenters. Defence Minister Bansi Lal jocularly told a journalist that 'if necessary we can reopen the old British jails in the Andaman Islands. The sea breeze there will soon help to cure J.P. of his kidney ailment'. Considering the rate at which India's prison population is growing, Mr Bansi Lal's pragmatism may have to be taken seriously before long.

Mr Jagannath Mishra, Chief Minister of Bihar, is reported to have told friends that he strongly opposes J.P.'s plans to return to his home state. It is believed that the pacifist statesman, who has not many more months to live in the opinion of doctors who have seen him, would like to spend his last days in Bihar. But Mr Mishra fears that the presence of J.P. in Bihar might in due course pose an unmanageable law and order problem. As Mr Mishra told a senior journalist of Patna: 'I would like to ban Narayan from coming back to Bihar as was done for years in the case of Sheikh Abdullah, who was banished from Kashmir. Alternatively, he can be re-arrested.'

The rearrest of J.P. cannot be absolutely ruled out. He was released after nearly five months in solitary confinement only because Mrs Gandhi panicked that he might die following the massive damage his kidneys suffered while in prison. But his fate has still been better than that of 81-year-old Morarji Desai, her former deputy prime minister. He is still in solitary confinement after almost a year. On 15 April Mr Desai was met by a government emissary who said that Mrs Gandhi would be willing to set him free if he gave a signed undertaking that he would retire from active politics. In characteristic fashion, the old man is said to have shown the visitor the door.

Meanwhile, with Mrs Gandhi's conquest of Gujarat and Tamil Nadu, the two states which provided a sanctuary for her critics, a nationwide manhunt has been launched for underground politicians. Reports available in Delhi, Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, Kanpur and other centres suggest that upwards of 30,000 wanted men and women are on the run. Hundreds have been captured, often thanks to information supplied by pro-Establishment teachers, journalists, businessmen and trade unionists. In Gujarat, one former office-holder of a railway union is said to have betrayed as many as 40 wanted men who had taken shelter in a group of villages in the Rajkot area.

At the same time many brave people are giving shelter to the fugitives. The Madhya Pradesh State Administration has made it known that anyone harbouring an absconder will be imprisoned without trial for a minimum period of five years. The chief target of the police are members of the Socialist

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SAVE IT

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Party whose leader, George Fernandez, is still evading arrest. A shoot-to-kill order has been issued in his case. Some reports say that Mr Fernandez has already fled the country but many people in Delhi fear that he may have been killed in one of several ambushes the police have been springing throughout the country for the underground.

Mr Fernandez has reportedly made some foolish statements to American newspapermen who managed to meet him underground. One is that Mrs Gandhi can only be removed by violence, meaning assassination. But close friends of the veteran trade union leader say that perhaps only one foreign newspaperman (and he an Englishman) has really met him during all these months. A widely held belief is that the George Fernandez who talked to American newsmen 'somewhere in India' was a counter-agent of the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), the CIA-type outfit mothered by Mrs Gandhi and now the favourite plaything of Sanjay.

Patna

John A. Loraine

Meeting the World's Urban Crisis

Alexander Solzhenitsyn wrote in his book, *Cancer Ward*, 'if we care only about happiness and about reproducing our species we shall merely crowd the earth senselessly and create a terrifying society'. In urban areas of the Third World overcrowding is endemic; procreative activity continues apace and the type of society envisaged by Solzhenitsyn looms nearer. When the UN sponsored Conference on Human Settlements assembles in Vancouver next week it will face a task of gargantuan proportions.

Man's habitat is changing at an unprecedented pace. In 1800 world population was less than 1,000 million and only 3.4 per cent of the people lived in cities. By 1900 numbers were in excess of 1,500 million and the percentage of urban dwellers had risen to 13.6. By early 1976 the global total had topped the 4,000 million mark; now town-dwellers constitute more than 40 per cent. By 2000, for the first time in human history and irrespective of any action likely to be taken at Vancouver, urban residents will outnumber those living in rural areas. At the beginning of this century there were only 11 cities in the world with over one million inhabitants; by 1960 there were 45, by 1975, 200; by 1985 there are likely to be 285 and the vast majority of these will be in the poor countries.

Between 1960 and 1970 some 200 million people in the Third World left the land and became town-dwellers; this is almost four times the current population of the UK and not far short of that of the US. Excessive urbanisation in the poor countries has now been woven into national life. It is an integral part of their overpopulation syndrome; it is a 'protest with the feet' against the failure of agricultural employment to keep up with population growth; it is a *cri de coeur* for a life of even marginally better quality.

Most Third World cities are dominated by slums and shanty towns. In Karachi 40 per cent of the population are slum-dwellers, in Ankara 45 per cent, in Addis Ababa 90 per cent. In Algeria the 'tin can towns', or *bidonvilles*, can be observed close to the centres of cities; in Tunisia people are still compelled to live in caves hewn from hillsides. Recently a government official described the capital of Bangladesh, Dacca, as one of the world's worst slums.

Some metropolitan areas in the poor countries are expanding at a truly phenomenal rate – much greater than that of the host nation itself. For example, in the Philippines the population of Manila, the capital, is increasing by 12 per cent a year while that of the country as a whole is growing by only 3.3 per cent. Accra is increasing its numbers by 7 per cent as against 2.7 per cent for Ghana as a whole. Lagos is reputed to be the fastest growing city in Africa; in 1963 its population was estimated at 1.5 million; in 1976 it was 3.3 million; by 1985 it is expected to top the 5 million mark. Calcutta has been termed the 'capital of over-population'. The title is well merited. The city is literally bursting at the seams with current numbers in excess of 7 million; street sleeping has become a commonplace occurrence; three quarters of the population live in shacks without tap water or sanitation. And the influx of agricultural workers into the city from the surrounding countryside is constantly increasing. So much so that by the end of the century Calcutta could be attempting to contain over 40 million people.

Urbanisation reaches its apogee in South America. Brazil is the continent's most populous country, and its urban problem is among the most acute and intractable in the world. Its cities are currently growing at about 6 per cent each year and already five metropolitan areas – Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Recife, Porto Alegre and Belo Horizonte – have passed the million mark. In 1950 only 30 per cent of the Brazilian population was urbanised. Ten years later the figure was 40 per cent; by 1980 it is likely to be over 55 per cent. The situation in other Latin American countries is similar. In 1920 Lima in Peru was a pleasant and relaxed town of 125,000 inhabitants; now it is a burgeoning metropolis of over 3 million, with numbers likely to double in 30 years. Mexico City has become a monster. In 1930 its population was in the region of 1 million; by 1975 it had swollen to 8.5 million, 60 per cent of the growth resulting from migration from poverty stricken rural areas. Oil-rich Venezuela, with its Opec membership and booming economy, does not stand apart, and the notorious *ranchos* of the capital Caracas provide accommodation for about half the city's population.

Some governments already have policies designed to staunch the flow of the populace to towns and cities. One of these is China, and this is scarcely surprising since, if present trends are permitted to continue, the population of Chinese cities could rise by 200 million during the final quarter of this century. Among the Marxist countries Cuba has been the pace-setter in relation to continuing urbanisation. Soon after the revolution against the Batista regime, the Castro government set out to check urban growth. It mounted strict controls over migration into cities; it provided financial incentives for those prepared to remain in rural areas. The Cuban authorities claim that these policies have been successful; in particular they take considerable credit for the marked boost which has recently been given to the agricultural sector of the economy.

The situation *vis-à-vis* the urban poor of the Third World is unquestionably sombre. Suffering and human degradation are widespread, in some cities more than others. Yet in spite of the enormity of the problem we need not allow ourselves to be overwhelmed by the dark waters of despair. For the resourcefulness and ingenuity of these people should not be under-estimated. They have a strong instinct for survival; if formal opportunities for a decent life are denied them they will endeavour *à outrance* to generate such opportunities for themselves. They become heavily involved in what planners quaintly term the 'informal economic sector'. They build their own homes, often of bizarre materials; they play a major role in distributive trades; they operate transport services; they indulge in small-scale manufacturing. At present most Third World governments regard the 'informal economic sector' as a pariah and refuse to negotiate with it. It should be a major aim of Vancouver to ensure that it is integrated fully within the official economic system of the country.

The British Government has so far played the Habitat Conference in low key. It hopes that it will be mainly technical, that 'experts' will hold the floor and that contentious political matters will be eschewed. But it is unlikely that this will be so; for just as at the UNCTAD meeting, still in progress in Nairobi, and at the previous UN-sponsored conferences on the environment, on population, on food and on women's rights, the ideological clash between the 'haves' and 'have-nots' will probably dominate the headlines. Again the affluent countries will be asked to shoulder their responsibilities to the Third World; again it will be pointed out to them that the gross under-development of the poor nations, and in particular the squalor of their cities, is a festering sore on the face of the earth; again it will be stressed that the West by its continued intransigence towards the aspirations of the developing world will be seen by history to be laying the axe to the root of the tree of social justice.

Delegates assembling in Vancouver will confront a message which is brutally clear. The message is that the world's planning priorities are wrong. There has been far too much capital investment in urban infrastructure often benefiting only a small elite;

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'Continuing recession has left the poorer developing countries in a desperate state of poverty and their future is unspeakably grim. CDC is to concentrate its activities to help the poorest people in those countries.'

Sir Eric Griffith-Jones KBE, CMG, QC, Chairman

Commitments

The poorer developing countries, which embrace about one-third of the world's population have few resources to cushion them against deterioration in their terms of trade. CDC, which operates in many of the worst affected countries, is aiming to place its new commitments over the next five years preponderantly in the poorer countries and into renewable natural resources projects which will significantly benefit the balance of payments in the host countries. During 1975, £15m was committed to new projects in the poorer countries and £12m to renewable natural resources projects. Estimated total commitments at 31st December 1975 were £268m; investments were £217m.

Management and training

The setting up and operation of worthwhile economically viable projects in the rural areas as elsewhere needs more than finance on the right terms; it needs competent and experienced management and a willingness and capacity to help with the training of nationals of the host country in management techniques and technologies. It has become very much a part of CDC's job to assist small farmers to increase the productivity of their land and to train nationals to carry on as instructors for their own people. Some 25 agricultural projects sponsored by CDC around the world provide training in modern farming practices for smallholders and more are planned. Altogether the Corporation was providing staff for some 60 projects overseas during the year, all but a few of which had appointed CDC as corporate managers, thereby securing not only its training techniques but also all the back-up services which it provides through its regional and territorial offices overseas and from its London headquarters.

1975 Results

CDC projects taken as a whole fared reasonably well in a year of economic uncertainty. Net surplus for the year was £280,655, which was appropriated to Reserve Fund.

CDC's Annual Report and Statement of Accounts 1975 is available from Government Bookshops and HMSO Government Publications Agents. Price £2.50.

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at the same time rural neglect and degeneration have been permitted to occur on an unprecedented scale. Winston Churchill was fond of saying 'things do not get better by being left alone. Unless they are adjusted they explode with a shattering detonation'. Planners and politicians attending the Habitat Conference, and faced with an urban crisis unique in human history, should perhaps bear those words in mind.

George Bishop

The Unamalgamated Engineers

'All men are brethren' it says at the front of the rule book of the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers (engineering section). Such brotherly sentiment was hard to find at the get-together of the 52-strong national committee – the supreme governing body of the union – last week in Scarborough. In the piquant surroundings of a mock-Dickensian style workhouse at the back of the Castle Hotel, the broad Left (dominated by 18 Communists) and the hard Right were locked in unarmed combat. It was just the latest skirmish in the endless internal war that has done so much to weaken the power and influence of Britain's second biggest union over recent years.

Postal-ballot elections have tilted the political balance on the seven-man executive council Rightward, and a similar process has been going on at divisional and district level in the union's labyrinthine structure. Opinion on the national committee moves far more slowly. Its members are elected not by the rank and file but via the 26 divisional committees of the union. Here the split between Left and Right is far more even and sharply defined. Tough right-wingers like Bill Jordan and Jim Griffin from Birmingham and the bearded, spruce John Weakley from Wales, who took president Hugh Scanlon to court last year for using his casting vote, are balanced by the uncompromising fundamentalists of the Left from Manchester, London and the Clyde – where ex-Communist Jimmy Reid and Jimmy Airlie, both of Upper Clyde Shipbuilders work-in fame, hold sway. Few waverers can survive on the national committee, but there are enough open to the conflicting pressures and arm-twisting of the opposed factions to spice proceedings with a touch of uncertainty. It is usually the brothers from the Tyne and Tees who must be wooed. This time they went with the Right – much to Hugh Scanlon's obvious relief.

The tedium of procedural wrangling (engineers love to take their 111-page rule-book seriously) and ritualistic debate often masked the real power struggle, but the opening blows of the week foretold a consistent triumph for the Right. Who sits on the standing orders committee is vital, for it is they who always decide the order of business. Scanlon was forced to toss a 50p coin when Reid and Weakley both collected 26 votes for a place on the committee. Reid won the call, but it made no crucial difference to the balance where the Right won a majority of the five members. This was a crucial success. It meant that delegates could discuss the new Government/TUC pay deal *before* they turned to yet another look at the executive's proposals for amalgamating the engineering section with its three smaller partners – technical and supervisory (Tass), foundry workers and constructional workers.

The Left argued passionately for the opposite. This would have postponed a decision on the pay deal until this week, when the entire union is holding its national conference. By doing so the Right would face certain defeat, for the tiny voting blocs from the three other sections would strengthen the engineering section's Left, giving it a clear, comfortable majority. This is what happened last year over the £6 pay policy. Such is the tortuous reasoning behind the manoeuvres that preoccupy AUEW delegates into the early hours of the morning in hotel bedrooms.

And consequently the wages debate was something of an anti-climax. The Government's cause was virtually won before it began. Most of the resolutions on the agenda were hostile to any pay restraint. The Kent division submitted one which put on the record its continued opposition to any form of incomes policy and its support for free collective bargaining. It 'instructed' the executive 'to carry through this principle in all negotiations affecting wages and conditions of our members'. However, when it came to voting time Messrs Lambourn and Simpson plumped for the deal. So did Mr W. Rowlands from Anglesey, though his division had a critical resolution down which said 'wage controls in a capitalist society can only lead to a reduction in the living standards of our members and their families'. The trouble is that those on the national committee have no clear mandate, so there is nothing to stop them voting against the spirit of their own divisions' opinions.

On amalgamation, the delegates deadlocked 26 to 26, but Scanlon lost his casting vote after last year's court injunction. The executive council moved the proposals for amalgamation had fallen, and next day the national committee went on to pass another resolution changing the representation on the new body that the smaller sections will find hard to swallow. The amalgamation fiasco, which has dragged on for over five years, is mainly the fault of the behaviour of Ken Gill, Communist general secretary of Tass. To the chagrin of the Right he has helped to turn the section into a highly disciplined monolith under Communist domination. Since 1974 over 30 full-time officials have been appointed by Tass. Over half are said to be Communists and the rest of 'the Marxist Left'. They are reputed to have an average age of 40 and they keep their jobs for life under the amalgamation proposals. But in the engineering section regular elections are held every three years for all full-time union officers. Both Right and Left there uphold that practice. Many delegates on the national committee saw no reason why Gill and his friends should never have to face their rank and file through a postal ballot, while the rest of the union's officials had to do so every three years. On this issue Gill has dug in his heels. As a consequence, the Left found itself losing the democratic argument. Scanlon often seems to be the only man at the top of the union who has a genuine desire to see amalgamation succeed. He tried in vain to get somebody to move an amendment which would have made it impossible for an appointed member of the new executive to stand for any other elected office in the union. That was one way of keeping Gill from the big prizes. The Right refused to swallow the bait – perhaps because most want amalgamation to fail, while the Left felt compelled to defend Gill's tactics rather than champion the democratic principle.

In practice the engineering section (1.2 million strong) seemed ready to display extraordinary generosity in the power the amalgamation would have given its smaller partners. Out of the new 150-strong national committee being proposed, only 91 places were to be for the engineering section, with 26 from Tass, 20 from the Foundry workers and 13 from Constructional. On the new 12-man executive council, seven engineers were to be balanced by two each from Tass and Foundry, with one from Constructional, and there was to be a similar distribution on the final appeal court. To apply salt to the wounds, delegates from the union to the TUC and Labour Party conferences were to be elected by and from the national union committee proportionately, not through the branches as at present. This carried the strong chance that AUEW delegates would form a hard Left bloc, not a spectrum of political opinions.

'In the 1920s when the AEU was formed it came with an upsurge from the members. This amalgamation is being imposed from above,' one delegate claimed. Some executive members are not too unhappy to see the amalgamation proposals lost. As general secretary John Boyd quoted enigmatically from Cato in his editorial in this month's *AUEW Journal:* 'Do not buy what you want but what you need. What you do not need is dear at a farthing.'

Yet the Right has won a Pyrrhic victory. The Engineering section is stagnating. Its finances are shaky. The ideal of one union for the engineering industry – enshrined in the rule book – has been soured by power politics. Those who enthuse about the necessity for electioneering in the unions need to take a cool look at what it has done to the AUEW. By turning it into a perpetual source of internal intrigue and conflict, it has weakened its effectiveness as a union. On that question both Right and Left find agreement. Ultra-democracy has locked them into a system from which there is no escape. No wonder Hughie Scanlon likes spending more of his time on the golf course nowadays.

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London Diary

☐ Honours are a topic of perpetual pleasure. The recipients are presumably delighted. Others can speculate maliciously why these particular honours have been awarded and why more deserving figures have been passed over. They are a treasured resource for me, always at a loss for a subject. I ran Charlie Chaplin and P. G. Wodehouse for years before my promptings struck home. The worst omission was Evelyn Waugh, who would have liked a knighthood or even, more appropriately, a baronetcy. It is strange that Evelyn wanted any title beyond that of the greatest novelist of the age. But since he wanted it he ought to have had it. Beyond such rare exceptions, who cares? No one goes up in public esteem merely because he is addressed as My Lord. If men enjoy possessing titles or dressing up in glittering robes, they should be indulged. Even Stalin invented a special uniform for himself as Generalissimo of the Soviet Union. Retiring prime ministers have every right to honour their personal friends. But some prime ministers have odd friends. It did not occur to me that a Labour prime minister would find his closest friends among millionaires. I have a personal reason for regret. Twice in my life I have written letters of congratulation to politicians – first to Duff Cooper on his resignation after Munich, and secondly to Harold Wilson when he became leader of the Labour Party. Now I know that Duff Cooper attempted to withdraw his resignation and that Neville Chamberlain did not allow him to do so. And I have no longer much enthusiasm for my former leader. Moral: do not congratulate politicians until they are dead.

☐ The trouble about honours is that they are mixed up with the House of Lords, which is a quite different matter. Life peerages were, I suppose, intended to improve the quality of the House. They have not done so. The House has become a resting place for elderly politicians who would otherwise have been put out to grass. The collective wisdom of the House has been rarely displayed. It does no harm except perhaps to occupy space in the Palace of Westminster, which could be put to better uses. It is said to hold debates though these are rarely reported. Maybe it keeps its members out of mischief. The late Lord Berners told me that he once attended the House and never went again because his umbrella had been stolen by a bishop. This, I fear, was an anti-clerical invention. I add one point. Sir Joseph Robinson, a South African millionaire, who started all the fuss more than 50 years ago by attempting to buy a peerage from Lloyd George, must now be laughing in his grave. As a matter of fact, the open sale of honours would be the most sensible way of distributing them. It would go a long way towards meeting the Budget deficit.

☐ The House of Lords, in one of its fits of activity, recently discussed Public Lending Right, by which authors would be paid something for the use of their books in public libraries. This use is of course one of the scandals of the age. Everyone else concerned with libraries – librarians, clerks, cleaners – gets paid for his services. Only the authors labour for nothing. But I am out of step with other authors and do not like PLR in its present form. The money for PLR is to come from the taxpayer or the ratepayer, so that authors, who also pay taxes and rates, will often be providing the money themselves. The reader should pay. No one grudges a 5p bus fare to get to the library. No one would grudge 5p to borrow a book. We do not get free concerts or free football matches. Why should books be the only form of entertainment that has to be free? I should say the same if most of the books borrowed were works of history instead of, as they are, mostly romantic fiction. Another fault is that best-sellers are to get less than their deserts. Again, why? PLR is not an act of charity to impoverished authors. It is a belated acknowledgment that authors have a right to be paid for their work like anyone else. Writing is regarded as a pleasure. It is not. The intellectual activity that precedes writing may be. But the mechanical task of driving a typewriter is just as monotonous as minding looms or screwing bolts on a motor chassis, whatever that is.

☐ I have just come back from Italy, where an American university has its European seat at Bologna. While there I was in an earthquake. Well, not very far in. The earthquake was some hundred miles away at Udine, and all that happened at Bologna was that the lights swung. The coming financial earthquake is having a similarly remote effect. The lights have swung. We remark that the pound has fallen again and think that this is of no consequence unless we are planning to go on holiday abroad. This is whistling in the financial dark. All moneyed men are sheep. When a few start, the rest follow. Besides, would any sane man hold sterling if he could exchange it for German marks or Swiss francs? With the prospect of state bankruptcy clearly in sight, the talk about incomes policy and wage limitation is a sighing of the wind. No one is going to bother much about incomes policy when the pound buys only a box of matches. What happens after that? The sensible course would be a siege economy, with import controls, rationing of essentials, direction of labour and industry, no private motoring, all sorts of lovely things. But this demands national unity and socialists who believe in socialism. Neither exists. The more likely outcome is savage deflation. No doubt there is a Ramsay MacDonald waiting in the wings.

☐ Another warning from Italy. Our pint of beer is apparently safe for the moment, though it will not be the same beer. The EEC does not approve of English hops, which are often male. In future only female hops will be allowed. In Italy the ravages of the EEC have struck more deeply. All my life when in Italy I have smoked Toscanas. These are long black cigars, made, I think, from horse dung, which the wise cut in two with a safety-razor blade. Garibaldi smoked them. Mazzini smoked them. In fact they were the unmistakable symbol of the Italian revolutionary. Now the EEC has ruled against any state monopoly of the manufacture of tobacco. Toscanas are, it seems, unprofitable to make, and no private firm will make them. They have disappeared from the bars and cafés. 'Finito! Finito!', and all because of some idiotic rule made in Brussels. Toscanas were the smoke of the poor as well as of revolutionaries, though in all honesty I must admit that I never saw anyone smoking them except myself. There is one little note of consolation: Toscanas are still obtainable in the Italian Parliament House. Legislators rarely apply to themselves the rules they lay down for others.

☐ However there is much to be thankful for. The climate has apparently changed for good. Maybe we are in for an unbroken run of Mediterranean-like summers. In such weather London is the best place to be in. Everywhere else in England will run short of water. London's water is safe and we can flush our lavatory cisterns to our hearts' content. Moreover London has the finest bathing place in the world. It is in beautiful country. You can sunbathe in the nude. You can swim in fresh spring water, with no clouds of chlorine rising from it. There is good company and high intellectual conversation which provides an agreeable background while dozing. I hope soon to be there every day. I have made many mistakes in life. One mistake I shall not make. I shall not reveal the whereabouts of this Earthly Paradise.

☐ As I draw to an end and count up my words, I realise with surprise that it is over 20 years since I last wrote a London Diary. A curious thing about growing old is that the years fold up like a telescope. Being a historian I have a good head for dates, and these keep my memories in some sort of order. Otherwise the whole post-war era would run together. What sticks most firmly in my mind is the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, the best cause I ever championed. And now in this gloomy world there is one welcome piece of news. The Japanese have renounced any claim to be a nuclear power. This puts the rest of us to shame.

A. J. P. Taylor

This England

Prizes: £1.50 book token for first entry, £1 tokens for others printed. Paste entries on a postcard.

☐ At Taunton Crown Court on Monday, aircraft fitter Christopher Dawson, an amateur fire eater, of the Duke of York public house, was fined £100, having failed a breath test when intercepted driving a three-wheeler. He said he had swallowed turpentine and paraffin in connection with a flame-swallowing performance. – *West Somerset Free Press* (H. E. L. Mellersh)

☐ After condemning what he called the 'sheer, damnable bone-idleness' of people who had not bothered to attend the meeting, Mr Normanton said it should be compulsory for people to perform some voluntary service. – *Alderley & Wilmslow Advertiser* (W. W. Mitchell)

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Martin Amis

I Didn't Get No...

Throughout the entire course of my visit to the first of the Rolling Stones concerts at Earls Court Arena last Friday night, I did not get my eyes spooned out, my teeth stomped in, or my head kicked off. Neither was I deafened, trampled, robbed or maimed. For these small highpoints in an otherwise rather disappointing evening, I hereby give laconic thanks.

Invited to appear promptly for the eight o'clock concert (people who arrived as late as 8.15, one gathered, would be 'turned away'), we joined the panting, aromatic multitude at 7.30 on the hotdog-strewn steps of the Earls Court building. The multitude was also, apparently, a queue: it contracted like a dying amoeba as the semi-circular throng oozed through the doors. Once inside, panic and claustrophobia jockeyed routinely for one's attention; for every hundredweight of humanity that surged through the doors, a tardy click could be heard, somewhere in the distance, every 20 seconds or so, as the ticketed trickle inched past the two or three turnstiles. Some people fainted, or were haggardly led to the pockets of air at the front of the queue. In the high tradition of all the best pop concerts, you were treated as if you had come to sate some vile addiction rather than simply to exchange cash for entertainment. Beyond the crush at the turnstiles, fans and policemen could be glimpsed moving about in relative freedom. A mere half an hour later, we joined them.

The ante-hall of the Earls Court Arena was a Brobdingnagian underground car park of remote and overcrowded bars, sweet shops and dirty hot-drinks machines. Normally a token homogeneity obtains at the average pop concert: David Bowie fans all look and behave like David Bowie, Bryan Ferry fans all look and behave like Bryan Ferry etc. But everyone is a Stones fan. On the concrete safari from the turnstiles to the concert area I was impartially menaced by sick junkies, posh druggies, junior droogs, fat suburbanite tikes (who half-tried to lure away the two girls I diffidently squired), elderly men in suits, platformed teenagers – and, I suppose, people like myself, who had quite liked the Stones a few years ago, who had somehow been given or got hold of tickets, and who were now wondering why they weren't somewhere else.

We entered the auditorium. Imagine a hot, dark, sealed football stadium – with people massed on the pitch as well as in the stands. Our tickets said row 'C' (hence the pack of Malleable Muffler Earplugs I had purchased on the way to the show). A T-shirted attendant appeared, frowned at our tickets, scratched his head, and took out a map. In the distance, about 3,000 fans away, a lone ginger-bearded policeman rocked on his heels. Perfect, perfect, I couldn't feel more secure. Our seats were as far away as they could possibly be from the bay through which we had entered, about 150 yards to the right of the podium. We gained them, and sat.

Meanwhile a bad supporting group called the Meters had started up – bad supporting groups being the conventional pop-concert means of (i) sapping your initial high spirits, and of (ii) paving the way for mass hysteria when the star attraction arrives. A coloured New Orleans group, the Meters gave a good indication of what was to come: their steely clatter made short work of what are laughingly known as the 'acoustics' of the venue, sending a torrential wall of sound boomeranging from one corner of the auditorium to the other. Once you were in your seat, too, the real proportions of the place could be gingerly absorbed. As in the Hells of Blake and Doré, the vaultfuls of shadowy supplicants stretch up high into the middle air; along the cornice level are squares of yellow light, where silhouettes of angular figures lean and hover. The Meters packed up their set. People got ready to be hysterical. As quivering roadies groped and blinked about on the stage, I fondled my earplugs. After the usual courteous delay – barely 20 minutes – we were off.

To a 'Dawn of Man'-type prelude from some undisclosed source, the huge leek-shaped tube behind the original stage started to unpeel in segments – and there, perched high on the tip of one of the descending petals, was the awful Mick himself. The stage flattened bouncily out, Mick began jumping up and down on the end of it, and the whopping chords of *Honky Tonk Woman* cracked out into the darkness. Immediately, as is the way at pop concerts, everyone got to their feet. I assume that the first few people to stand up do so out of genuine excitement; the rest do so because they can't see if they don't. People who prefer not to stand up get angry with people who do, and luckily I had a particularly strident and foul-mouthed lot of people behind me to yell at and threaten the lot of people in front of me, who had stood up but soon sat down again. (I turned to see a clump of hate-contorted faces that kept me safely strapped to my seat throughout.)

I was glad I could see the stage, unimpressive though it was from my vantage – and it must have been a flea-circus to the thousands further back. Glad, because it soon became clear that the evening would offer nothing to gratify even the rudest ear. Mick's voice came over as a strangled, monotone holler; the instruments weren't distinguishable from one another; the two percussion men (Watts plus a dusky bongoist) merely provided a basic fuzz on the general cataract of sound. And this wasn't, as they say, just me: a dozen bars of *Get off my Cloud*, easily identifiable on record, passed without comment from the audience, and only when Mick started up did the crowd click, granting the applause traditionally accorded to an ex-number one. Indicatively, too, the two or three new Jagger-Richard creations left the fans embarrassingly cold; only the songs already embossed on the responses could be recreated by the frenzied approximations from the stage. No, it was all too big; there were too many people; you couldn't respond to the music because it couldn't respond to you.

Visually, though, one got some of the point of it – or some of the point of Mick. This well-put-together, vitamin-packed unit of a human being does not really dance any more: it's simply that his head, his shoulders, his pelvis, both his arms, both his legs, both his huge feet and both his buttocks are wriggling, at great speed, independently, all the time. When at one point Mick abruptly fell over, for instance, you couldn't tell whether or not he had meant to; it didn't particularly matter, but you couldn't tell. And when he swung out on a cable over the adoring stalls, I wondered how he could contain his galvanic twitching long enough to stay attached to the rope. No question: Mick is, without a doubt, one of our least sedentary millionaires.

Such energy communicates itself, even to

Roger Woddis

Postman's Knock

'Less service and higher charges will kill the postal service.' – Tom Jackson.

'You are crazy, Sir William,' Tom
Jackson said,
And twirled his moustache as he spoke;
'The Post Office, though not
officially dead,
Is becoming a music-hall joke.'

Sir William replied, 'Though our charges
are high,
We're cutting our costs to the bone;
And if you should think I am telling a lie,
You've only to pick up a 'phone.'

'You've cut down deliveries: isn't
that daft,
And losing you custom?' said Tom.
'Oh, what does it matter?' Sir William
R. laughed,
'As long as we're making a bomb!'

'The postage on parcels has gone through
the roof;
Can you wonder the users complain?'
Sir William replied by remaining aloof
And doing his best to look sane.

Said Tom, 'They won't stand for the prices
you charge,
Your profit's uncommonly fat;
You can't go on robbing the public
at large.'
'The public? Oh, pray, what is that?'

'A service,' said Tom, 'that is really
a ramp
Is hardly the way to compete.'
'Why not,' said Sir William, 'a
50p stamp? –
Allow me to sell you a sheet.'

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a half-engaged audience. 'My head is really scrambled,' a nearby fan sobbed after *Midnight Rambler*. 'Want some Kit-Kat?' droned another lugubriously to his girl friend after the same song. But the more vehemently eager-to-be-pleased sections of the audience, having set their hearts on losing their heads, now began to behave as if they actually had. Jumping up and down was the favourite form this activity took, and soon everyone near me was doing it, despite the vicious denunciations from further behind. '*Are you feeling good*?' Mick demanded. 'ARE YOU FEELING GOOD?' No, not at all, I thought, deciding to leave. And having staggered through the forsaken halls into the Earls Court Road, I was obscurely relieved to find that the world hadn't gone mad in my absence. Perhaps I'm too old for this sort of thing now – too old to buy fruitless discomfort at £1 an hour. I shouldn't have gone. I'm never going again.

First Person

Arthur Marshall

Taking Liberties

I really rather like an amusing prank of the kind frequently invented by undergraduates. Cambridge has an enviably high record in this respect. There was the morning when the sun's bright rays illumined a gleaming Austin Seven car, carried up in sections and assembled during the hours of darkness and now splendidly visible for all to admire upon the roof of the Senate House. And there was that moment in the Twenties when the entire undergraduate population gathered, towards midday, in the market place, summoned thither by word of mouth and assembled nobody knowing quite why. Then, as the city clocks boomed out 12, weird noises rang out from beneath the paving-stones and, to a loud banging of drums and blaring of trumpets, King Tutankhamun and his swarthy entourage were seen making a stately ascent into the light of day up the steps from the underground Gentlemen's lavatory, itself mysteriously dim and tomb-like. They had not, alas, with them either mummies or treasures richly wrought in gold but they had done the best that ingenuity could devise with items of bedroom furniture.

The whole charade was, of course, in aid of something or other. Whenever, in an Exeter street, I am held up to ransom by bands of students quaintly dressed and charitably collecting for some good cause, I give in a manner which in my little 'group' ranks as generous (20p). But not all pranks have generous objects. One of the best of recent years passed almost unnoticed in the newspapers. We all remember the famous photograph of somebody scuttling hastily down the steps of the Tate, picture in hand, but the episode of which I write was the exact converse of this. An art student, wishful for a wider recognition of his talents, strode bravely into the National Gallery with one of his own pictures, found an empty space on a wall, hammered in a nail and proudly hung up his painting. It is said to have remained there for 17 days before anybody, other than art-lovers, noticed it.

Coronations have always been an ideal moment for pranks, with wags dressing up elaborately as eastern potentates and, with no court official daring to question whether they are in truth the Rajah of Rumti-Poo, finding themselves bowed into places of honour. At the most recent coronation there was at least one eastern potentate whom nobody could doubt – the wonderfully cheerful, dusky Queen Salote of Tonga, scornful of closed carriages and disdaining umbrella and macintosh, beaming away and wildly waving, a sodden mass of finery with the rain pouring relentlessly down her charming face. In front of her in the carriage sat a diminutive black equerry. 'Who's that with her?' somebody asked Noël Coward. 'That,' said Mr Coward, 'is her lunch.'

I was lucky enough to watch the coronation procession from my club in Pall Mall. Drinks flowed, many toasts were drunk, and as the day wore on I became aware that a revered member, Mr A, having done his dutiful share of loyally toasting Her Majesty, had now decided to take a refreshing nap, his choice of an ideal spot on which to recline being the mat immediately inside the double doors that lead to the street. An hour or so went by and I became anxious about him. Ought something to be done? I approached the club secretary and passed on to him my disquiet. 'Is Mr A breathing?' asked the secretary. 'Oh indeed, yes. Actually, he's snoring rather loudly.' 'Is he being a nuisance to anybody?' Well, people coming in and out had to step over him, I explained, but that simple procedure could hardly be described as a nuisance. 'In that case,' said the secretary, 'I shall do nothing. If a member wishes to lie down and sleep anywhere in the club, he is perfectly free to do so. Good afternoon to you.' I had been ticked off. It was a fine lesson in personal liberty.

We should all be growing increasingly exercised about preserving our liberties. One can no longer, it seems, sell a possession to whom one wishes. Not a house, anyhow. And, in the matter of houses, what else would one not be allowed to do? Moving about London, one is constantly finding on house walls those agreeable blue and white plaques announcing that this or that prime minister or actor of note lived here. For some time I have been urging my pleasant friends, the Hendersons, resident in a trim 'terraced home' in SW3, to put up a similar blue and white plaque saying 'Tim and Dorothy Henderson live happily here'. Now, what do you suppose would happen? Whence would come the first crosspatch rat-a-tat on the door instructing them to take it down? For come it would, who can doubt? And why? What conceivable wrong would they be doing? Just a harmless prank.

I have come to loathe and be suspicious of all officialdom. 'They' are there to do us down in one way or another. I had an early example of them at work, in this case the War Office. After a skirmish called Dunkirk, those fortunate enough to emerge were issued with a list of clothing (we were mostly left just with what we stood up in) for which a claim might be made. On the list were 'six handkerchiefs'. I duly claimed for these and other missing items. In a week or so, a peremptory letter arrived. I could only have five handkerchiefs, as 'one handkerchief should have been carried on the person'. There's clear thinking for you.

In the old days, the Foreign Office used to own a de luxe country establishment to which hopeful examinees for the service were sent to discover whether they knew the accepted way of handling knives and forks at dinner. It was rumoured that explosive foods were provided to discover whether they said 'pardon' after hiccoughing. I have a theory that somewhere, in affluent Hampstead perhaps, an expensive residence has been taken over, known as Horrid House, to which all government and county council officials are sent for a final course in nastiness (all those even capable of smiling are instantly ejected). How else can one explain the uniform chilliness of the letters they write and the odious attitudes of the writers? 'I am to say that . . .' 'Doubtless you are familiar with form 784/P/42(b) . . .' 'We are at a loss to understand . . .' 'Unless you remit . . .' and so on. Never a kind word. Never a helpful phrase. Not even a cheery PS. ('Have you recently had rain? Here, alas, we are as dry as a bone!'). Everything rude and hateful. Nasty and getting nastier. Let those impertinent tax officials watch out for trouble when they come bursting into 'Myrtlebank' uninvited and start riffling through my 'things'.

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Letters to the Editor

Ivory Towers in Education

Sir, Peter Wilby (NS 21 May) rightly argues that 'the best in education ought to go to those who are already earning their living'. The case for redirecting resources towards part-time and post-experience higher education is overwhelming. It has been documented in detail by the Russell report on adult education and the House of Commons Expenditure Committee report on post-graduate education. From my own experience at Birkbeck College, teaching part-time, post-experience postgraduates, I find the purely *academic* arguments for this mode of education just as compelling as its cost-effectiveness and the instrumental values which Mr Wilby stresses. The maturity of these students and their diverse backgrounds complement their academic training and put it in context.

All this is, indeed, so obvious that it is now conventional wisdom, at least in theory. It also clearly accords with socialist principles. Yet there is little evidence that priorities have seriously been reassessed, or that resources will actually be shifted accordingly. The Open University is an admirable innovation, but not a substitute for a comprehensive policy for part-time, post-experience education; and Mr Wilby correctly points out that the polytechnics have not implemented the 'radical alternative' which some thought was their natural mission.

As Mr Wilby says, 'the one area of higher education which has not benefited from the post-Robbins boom is part-time education'. Having missed the opportunity of redistributing resources during a period of growth, we should have no illusions: under foreseeable constraints on public expenditure, to increase support now for part-time education must require some diversion of resources from full-time education. This applies not only at the institutional level, but also to student grants and finance. (A small fraction of the support necessary for a full-time student could make all the difference to the hard-pressed part-time student who, beyond sacrificing leisure time, incurs additional expenses – fees, fares, child-minding – and who might benefit disproportionately from only a few weeks of full-time study as examinations approach.) Part-time, post-experience education is a valid mode at *all* levels, in all sectors of higher education, from advanced further education up to and *including* taught postgraduate courses and research. This is perhaps Mr Wilby's only error – he goes too far in identifying full-time study with an excessively detached university tradition and part-time study with 'applying existing knowledge'. Academic inquiry need not escape completely from reality; and concern for applying knowledge need not be confined to primarily vocational training. Part-time, post-experience education in the universities is a uniquely valuable way of bridging the unhealthy gap which Sir Alex Smith has identified.

RICHARD PORTES

Department of Economics
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Sir, I wholeheartedly agree with the views expressed in Peter Wilby's article 'The Outdated University Tradition'. The predominant frame of mind in higher education is that status can only be achieved by maximising 'scholarship and research' at the expense of practical education, so that many polytechnics and colleges of education are fast becoming bizarre universities-manqué. One trend, of which I have had direct experience as a university external examiner for various colleges of education, is the gradual shift in emphasis away from teacher-training towards the establishment of BA general and honours degrees, while at the same time trying to reduce staffing from economic necessity. At staff level nobody seems to know what these degrees are for; there is only the unquestioned assumption that degree courses are a 'good thing'. The existence of higher degrees in librarianship offers another example of the same process.

The word for this frame of mind is 'autistic': institutes of higher education which were originally constituted to generate practical expertise are turning away from the refractory real world to pursue their own outmoded Platonic Ideal of academia. (I feel that the word 'pure' has a lot to answer for in the move from 'less applied' to 'purer' to 'better'.) It is the business of central government to bring them back to reality.

JAMES RUSSELL

31 Grange Road
Chester

Sir, Peter Wilby follows up his earlier provocative claim that *schools are for learning* by an account of the failure of successive administrations to deal with the cultural grand tour view of education, but the matter is deeper than he supposes. The conviction that making – or even designing and making – is unworthy and certainly not educationally acceptable, is so deeply embedded in the minds of academics, headmasters and parents, that it is false and unhelpful to blame the universities entirely. Handling tools deftly so often attracts the comment 'mere craftsmanship'. Illiteracy may be a shortcoming to hide in shame – or write reports about – but 'immanuracy' is something to declare with pride. 'I can't even knock a nail in', intoned smugly by so many academics, clearly proclaims a belief in a divine compensation of intellectual power for manual backwardness. 'What book, beside the Bible and Shakespeare, would you like on the island?' Roy Plomley asks, when what the castaway needs is a can of oil and a repair kit to keep the gramophone running, or tools to turn the gramophone parts into useful aids to existence when he wears the records out.

All school subjects that relate to the productive process, even the more distant, carry this taint of being 'vocational' or 'applied' and not educationally okay; that they rely on persistent work and application to ensure success hardly guarantees popularity. When the extent of an outmoded commitment to *education for the sons of gentlemen* is recognised, together with the degree to which this imperial hangover strangles efforts to design, make and sell our way out of pawn, we may perhaps see that only a radical review of our most deeply held assumptions about education can provide that emphasis which Wilby writes about.

In the nation's schools, for example, courses called 'technical studies' – newly equipped with workshops, machine tools, laboratories and drawing offices – are trying to fashion a new design technology ethos, *an interest in the artefact and its creative production,* but are hampered by a shortage of teachers deriving directly from the issue that Wilby raises. We have been led to believe that there is a surplus of teachers, the figures are quoted almost daily, but the *shortage* in the technical studies (handicraft) field will leave at least 500 posts vacant in the next session. And this shortage is likely to be aggravated year by year as student candidates for teaching workshop and technical studies are further discouraged by the grudging acceptance of this and kindred subjects in favour of the arts.

The shortage of teachers for technical studies, mathematics and science is a symptom of the disease that leaves us with universities so unconcerned with the productive processes generally. The cure is nothing less than cultural reversal to include control of resources and student choice. Such a redirection of effort must clearly start in the schools. The warning to (was it Croesus?) comes to mind: 'Someone will come with better iron than yours and will take away your gold.' We may indeed find ourselves selling off our art treasures and libraries to those with better iron. And that is a thought to chill the hearts even of the wilfully 'immanurate'.

AVIGDOR CANNON

Department of Design Technology
Shoreditch College of Education
Englefield Green, Surrey

Sir, Peter Wilby claims that 'the growth in higher education has made no perceptible contribution either to greater social equality or to faster economic growth'. He links these goals by pointing to the high esteem in which academic study is held compared with practical skills.

However, he totally neglects the possibilities that (1) manufacturing industry has an adequate supply of competent engineers and technologists (for both innovative and administrative purposes), and (2) those qualified in non-scientific subjects do not clog the job centres disproportionately. While (1) and (2) obtain (and I have seen no evidence to suppose otherwise), the universities can hardly be accused of offering an imbalance of subject entrance. In which case Mr Wilby's *economic* argument collapses. My impression is that industry's problems are financial, not technological.

I should add that I worked in manufacturing industry for 17 years, gained my technological qualifications by part-time study and am at present reading philosophy full-time!

NICK STRATTON

13 Trinity Street
Cambridge

Sir, It appears that we have come to the pass that the question 'What are you doing at college?' inevitably brings the reply 'sociology' – to which the only reaction seems to be 'but of course'.

To Peter Wilby's point that class-room dilettantism acts to the detriment of serious study may I add that by cluttering up our establishments of higher education with pursuers of mumbo-jumbo we are nurturing at our present and future expense an up-to-date species of drone incapable of facing the exigencies of the real world. The same applies with equal justice to the recipients of art scholarships, 99 per cent of whom will never do anything worthwhile in that field or, after their prolonged nursery training, in any other.

ARTHUR J. KEEFE

88 Wyndcliff Road
London SE7

A Left and Right for Jones

Sir, It's time someone told Jack Jones (NS 21 May) that no democratic socialist party can survive, in power or out, for long on the basis of the alternative being contemptible. It needs to make a more positive appeal than that. And some of us still want to move towards a democratic socialist society – not just stagnate in a more comfortable status quo than the Tories would provide.

The trouble with the present Government/TUC agreement is not that it represents an incomes policy but that it represents an incomes policy with neither a social nor a

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political content: that, as your front-page editorial pointed out (NS 7 May), it deflects the political thrust for reform and leaves the structure of society and the distribution of wealth untouched. To express this view isn't to snipe from the sidelines. It is an indication of genuine concern that the Labour Party in government does not seem as determined as it might be to ensure the successful implementation of policies it advocated while in Opposition.

If the Government fails to win the next election it will not be because some party members have actually had the temerity to express concern but because there are aspects of government policy which many party members (and trade unionists) find difficult to equate with what they have always understood the Labour Party should be about.

MICK FARLEY

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Fillans Field
Sandy, Bedfordshire

Sir, I read Jack Jones's article 'In Defence of the TUC' with interest because it is always enlightening to read the inner thoughts of a prominent member of the Establishment. I say 'Establishment' deliberately because, like so many conservative (with a small c) people, he appears to be living in a world of make-believe. He talks about 'more money to be provided for the NEB and a new investment fund to be set up' and yet fails to say from where the money is to come. In a week when the pound has slipped three cents against the dollar (and incidentally in the entire article there is no mention of the pound) I, as a businessman, can hardly be blamed for thinking that Mr Jones is evading the main issues of importance.

He then raises the question of a wealth tax and suggests that there is a quantity of wealth in this country to be taxed. Again he is unspecific and fails to give any details of what revenue could be raised. Finally, he writes about those worst hit by inflation – the unemployed, the pensioners, the disabled, the widows and 'the underprivileged generally'. Many would argue, be they socialists, Conservatives or Liberals, that a very major reason for inflation was the greed of large unions in the early Seventies. If they had thought then of the sections of the population which Mr Jones appears to be concerned about now, maybe the worst of the slump that we are experiencing now would not have occurred. For they certainly did not benefit in the large wage rises of the early Seventies.

I feel that it is a pity that Mr Jones was unable to write about future wealth for everybody, greater involvement in Europe (both economically and politically) and last, but by no means least, less bureaucracy and less state intervention – for the Englishman is fundamentally an individualist at heart.

EDWARD HAY

11 Stack House
Cundy Street
London SW1

View from the Valleys

Sir, John Morgan makes some perceptive points in 'Labour's Rout in Wales' (NS 14 May) but his apocalyptic style does tend to lead him to exaggerate what has recently taken place in Welsh politics. A sober view of the local election results shows that the only really dramatic changes occurred in two areas, Swansea and Merthyr; the remainder were no worse than other parts of the country. After concluding prematurely that a complete disaster for Labour has taken place he suggests the reason to have been that 'Labour lost because it was the party in power, and because it abused that power'; again, there may well be evidence for this view in respect of a small area of South Wales, but little evidence that this was generally the case.

Finally, he thinks that the reason that this 'abuse of power' came to light was due to the efforts of a small circulation radical magazine called *Rebecca*, which made a number of allegations against, among others, certain politicians. If he had lived in Wales, Mr Morgan would have been aware that *Rebecca* was influential on a small scale, and that the really influential contribution in awakening public interest was the BBC-2 *Man Alive* production called 'Something in the Air'. The latter programme Mr Morgan may well be embarrassed to recall – since if the 'abuse of power' was so evident it still took a London-based company to highlight it rather than BBC Wales, or Harlech Television, in which latter organisation Mr Morgan plays a key role, not least as programme adviser.

May I conclude by suggesting that the Labour Party in Wales is not quite as routed as has been suggested – indeed the vacuum left by the sweeping away of the old guard may well be filled by the young and idealistic who recognise that there is no genuine alternative for the radical in Wales?

BARRY SHEERMAN

University College
Swansea

Words and Meanings

Sir, As Mr Jeffrey Simmons's letter (NS 21 May) strongly suggests, whatever and however one writes there will always be some people who find something to complain of. But the fact that perfect clarity and ease are unattainable is surely no reason not to try to move in their general direction. Sin, crime and disease are all ineradicable, but preaching, policing and doctoring must continue.

Mr Simmons and I differ less than he seems to think. I agree very strongly with the spirit of his remark about the recurring need to sacrifice 'style and correct usage . . . in the interests of clarity'. Perhaps he will forgive me for going through the motions of puzzlement over what he says about the book he mentions: 'Although of American origin, I am sure it will amuse, if not instruct, some of your readers.' I can't think that any NS reader will regard Mr Simmons's American origin as the least disqualification for recommending books, or is it for being sure about something? But what of that? – long may he flourish among us!

KINGSLEY AMIS

Lemmons
Hadley Common
Barnet, Herts.

Out of Sight, Out of Mind

Sir, Donald Gould (NS 21 May) is, I fear, over-optimistic in believing that citizens of goodwill, like 'teenagers and retired admirals', making regular visits to long-stay hospitals as members of Community Health Councils could 'lay the ghost of Ely once and for all'. Ely is a hospital for the mentally handicapped, like many of those in which inquiries have taken place, but the mentally handicapped do not, by and large, require the services of specialised nurses and doctors for their long-term management. Unfortunately, for them to operate within the National Health Service it seems necessary for this charade to be enacted, although close study of the reports of the many inquiries reveals that this is the main underlying cause for the severe strains, of which the outbursts that precipitate public investigations are merely the symptoms. The recent reorganisation of the National Health Service, whereby the authoritative structure lies through a relatively small group of influential administrators – medical, nursing and lay – many of whom have little or no knowledge of mental handicap (and the advisory structure overwhelmingly supports the traditional medical disciplines of surgery, medicine etc.) has predictably produced a casualty in the hospital service for the mentally handicapped. Either our notions about what services we intend to deliver through a health care system must be considerably revised and renegotiated at a fundamental level or (as the present Government proposed) a separate National Service for the Mentally Handicapped should be set up with its own funding. I cannot believe that tinkering with a fundamentally faulty design will effect a lasting cure.

TOM PILKINGTON

33 Palmerston Place
Edinburgh

Of Rats and Men

Sir, Martin Staniland (NS 21 May) is not alone in disliking political theorising unrelated to actual situations. What is curious is that his piece should be sparked off by a paper (of mine) which seeks to show the relevance of this theorising to issues in urban politics. Could it be that your contributor missed the paper's discussion of topics such as the role of local authorities in depressed areas in challenging central government policy, or the political effects of urban renewal, while he was mentally preparing his piece? His view that the universities are unaffected by the current crisis suggests that his grass-roots work in Glasgow may have led him to miss other things too.

C. G. PICKVANCE

Keynes College
The University
Canterbury, Kent

International Brigade

Sir, July 1976 will see the 40th anniversary of the outbreak of the war in Spain which ended in the overthrow of the legally elected Government of Spain by Franco and his armed forces, aided by the might of Hitler and Mussolini. At a reunion held in Manchester this year it was proposed that the wealth of unrecorded experience of the men and women assembled there and of those unable to be present should be gathered together and recorded for posterity. To this end a group of oral historians and other experts have agreed to help in a week of research which will take place at the Co-operative College, Stanford Hall, Loughborough from 31 July to 7 August 1976.

Many of your readers, who understand the role that the International Brigade played in Spain will be interested in this venture. It is possible that those who helped in the Foodship for Spain, Spanish Medical Aid or worked for the Basque refugees may have posters, leaflets and other mementos that could be exhibited. I will be pleased to hear from them.

SAM WILD
President

International Brigade Association
Vicarage Lane
Basden, Cheshire

Michael Fussell

Sir, A retrospective exhibition of paintings by the late Michael Fussell (1926-1974) is being organised for the month of June, to be held at 62 Regents Park Road, London NW1. We are anxiously trying to trace pictures by him, and may I, through your columns, ask if anyone owns a painting or knows of anyone who does? If they do, I should be very interested to hear from them as soon as possible at the address below.

SARAH BUCHAN

62 Regents Park Road
London NW1

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BOOKS & ARTS

Keith Thomas

The Pursuit of Love

The Making of the Modern Family by EDWARD SHORTER *Collins* £4.50

Fifteen years ago scarcely anyone studied the history of the family. Nowadays it is hard to think of a topic on which more energy, money and computer time have been lavished. When the historians of France, America and, to a lesser extent, England meet together, the talk is not of Magna Carta or the French Revolution; instead, the engrossing topics are the age of marriage, household structure, child-rearing, family size and systems of inheritance. This shift in interest is all to the good, for these matters were central to the lives of our ancestors and they have been woefully neglected for too long. But as yet the new inquiries have had little general impact. Most investigations have been microscopic in scale. Many have been dauntingly statistical in character. Nearly all are accessible only to readers of learned periodicals.

There is therefore everything to be said for a readable book which will give a reliable synthesis of these widely scattered researches. Mr Edward Shorter, an American who teaches at the University of Toronto, is well qualified for the task. He has already made important contributions to the history of illegitimacy and premarital pregnancy. He is the author of a lucid work on *The Historian and the Computer* and therefore not the sort of man to be daunted by graphs, curves, coefficients and confidence intervals. He is exceedingly well-read in the secondary literature. Above all, he writes with great verve in a jauntily informal style which purists may find uncomfortably reminiscent of the *Reader's Digest*, but which has a markedly sharper intellectual edge. Sometimes his prose wobbles uneasily between the sociological and the demotic: 'People cut loose from the moorings of community allegiance,' he writes, 'would quickly drift towards fooling around.' But for the most part his book is vivid, admirably digested, immensely lively and full of ideas. It appears under the imprint of publishers who do not usually handle historical works unless they are likely best-sellers; and, by present-day standards, it is very reasonably priced. This, then, ought to be *the* history of the European family, telling us, as the author promises, all that we can at present hope to know.

Unfortunately, the book turns out to be like Froude's celebrated *Life of St Neot*; it tells us not all that is known about the subject, but rather more than all. Instead of contenting himself with a summary of research to date, Mr Shorter has chosen to draw on this research to buttress a striking but highly idiosyncratic argument.

First, it seems, there was 'traditional' society, or, as Mr Shorter whimsically puts it, the Bad Old Days. Before the 18th century the community at large was more important than the family. Courtship was superintended by the whole neighbourhood and occurred mainly at communal festivals. 'Private' life was subject to collective regulation, either by the formal procedures of the state and church against fornicators, scolds and adulterers or by the informal sanctions of the village *charivari* against marital quarrellers. There was little privacy at home and members of the family spent much of their time away from it. The attitude to sex was instrumental. Men married for land or to perpetuate their line. Peasant marriage was loveless. Women were subordinate drudges. Great inequality of age between the spouses was common. Their sex life was spasmodic. Conceptions occurred seasonally, indicating irregular intercourse during the year. The erotic drive was low.

Then in the 18th century came the 'great surge of sentiment'. It arose from the 'subculture of the oppressed'. Working-class women, emancipated by the Industrial Revolution which had made them independent wage-earners, chose to put the pursuit of love above other considerations. Illegitimacy and premarital pregnancy soared accordingly. The middle classes were slower to give primacy to their sexual affections, but they released a parallel wave of sentiment within the family. Maternal love replaced centuries of infant neglect. The family withdrew into its private nest, cutting off its links with the rest of the community. Courtship became a private matter. So did baptisms, weddings and funerals. The intense collective life of the past was replaced by privacy and domesticity.

There were, says Mr Shorter, two great sexual revolutions. The first came in the later 18th century. It was a premarital revolution in which affection triumphed over everything else. Courting couples followed their feelings rather than the demands of the community. The result was more sex before marriage, greater equality in age between marriage partners and marital intercourse all the year round. In due course the woman's right to orgasm was accepted. Marriage had become eroticised.

The second sexual revolution came in the 1960s and 1970s. It involved the separation of coitus from marriage. The emphasis was on sexual hedonism and experimentation. There was more sex in marriage, more sex out of marriage, more oral-genital sex, more masturbation, more sex of every kind. What Mr Shorter euphemistically calls 'serial monogamy' (only one sleeping-partner at a time) replaced old-fashioned marriage. His last chapter is entitled 'Towards the Postmodern Family (or Setting the Course for the Heart of the Sun)':

> The nuclear family is crumbling – to be replaced, I think, by the free-floating couple, a marital dyad subject to dramatic fissions and fusions, and without the orbiting satellites of pubertal children, close friends, or neighbours . . .

This argument is put forward with more sophistication than a brief summary might suggest, but not much more. In America Mr Shorter's thesis has already incurred a battery of criticism. In the first place, his admirable attempt to bring changes in thought and feeling into the history of the family breaks down through his inability to discover the sources by which such changes in sentiment can be best illuminated. His main evidence for the supposed sexual revolution of the later 18th century is the undoubted increase in illegitimacy and premarital pregnancy during that period, particularly in France. But this increase is in no way proof of any change in attitude or sentiment. Far from women being 'emancipated' by their new experience of the city and the factory, it is more likely that they became more vulnerable and easier to exploit. The pathetic confessions accompanying the *déclarations de grossesse* suggest that the aim of these unmarried mothers was not free love but matrimony. The evidence for a new proletarian desire for sexual gratification has yet to be produced.

Mr Shorter has supplemented his statistics with the testimony of middle-class doctors. But he makes no attempt to study working-class values more directly. Instead he projects back on to the lower classes of the 18th century a 20th-century ethic of sexual 'fulfilment' which they almost certainly never held. Mr Shorter's recurring error is to postulate a change in sentiment where others would see only a change in circumstances. If medieval peasants sometimes married women twice their age, this reflected the exigencies of their situation: limited acquaintance, poor communications and an overwhelming dependence on access to land. It did not mean that they were indifferent to sexual considerations. If 18th-century women got pregnant outside marriage, it suggests that they had fallen victim to the perils of the city, not that they had adopted a philosophy of sexual liberation.

The second conceptual weakness of the book is its reliance on a crude polarity between 'traditional' society on the one hand and 'modern' society on the other. This reduction of all historical change to a simple process of 'modernisation' has long had a dismal influence on North American political science and it is sad to see it affecting social history as well. 'Modernisation' usually means becoming like 20th-century Americans. Mr Shorter gives this assumption a new twist by suggesting that Americans were unique in that they were 'modern' from the start. By this he means that even in the 17th century the Puritans of New England accepted married love (he does not stop to consider whether this might not have been a trait they shared with their European counterparts).

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The trouble is not just that Mr Shorter's language is redolent of the encounter group, with its 'imaginative sex play', 'erotic inventiveness' and 'new capacity to explore one's sensory responses'. More serious is his extraordinary picture of 'traditional' society as one where erotic impulses, particularly those of women, were dulled to near-insensibility. As he sees it, it was only capitalism which set eroticism free, by making consumer gratification an ideal in the non-economic domain. At this point every reader with the slightest acquaintance with the history of the world before 1750 will cry out in protest. Has Mr Shorter never heard of ancient Greece or India? Has he never read Chaucer or Shakespeare? Does he not know that for centuries women were regarded as the more lascivious sex? As Professor Le Roy Ladurie's recent study of the Pyrenean village of Montaillou has shown, there was a good deal of permissiveness among medieval peasants. In England the church courts were often overwhelmed by the number of fornicators and adulterers: one 15th-century act book of the dean and chapter of York contains the names of no less than 3,236 sexual offenders. Yet Mr Shorter regards even masturbation as the invention of 'modernisation', apparently because he thinks the practice was not much discussed before the 18th century. As for his suggestion that there is something novel about oral-genital sex and sexual experimentation, I recommend as an antidote the writings of the medieval canonists. The penitentials compiled by Dark Age churchmen suggest that they had little to learn from modern America. The history of eroticism, in short, is an infinitely more complicated subject than Mr Shorter suggests.

It is a pity that Mr Shorter's contempt for 'literary' sources prevented him from bringing his great talents to bear upon that vast corpus of imaginative literature in which the changing sensibilities of European men and women are indelibly recorded. He dismisses it as 'largely the work of the upper middle classes and the aristocracy', representing 'the experience of perhaps 5 per cent of the population'. This is a shallow view, for some authors are, like Shakespeare, universal in their range, while there are few who do not indirectly throw light on the situation of those outside the audience they were addressing. Besides, there is a mass of popular literature, and an endless quantity of legal depositions, through which we may hear the authentic voices of the poor themselves. Mr Shorter's revealingly bemused reference at one point to 'a certain Mrs Thrale' suggests that in his indifference to literature he may be making a virtue of necessity.

The very clarity of Mr Shorter's argument and the brashly engaging nature of his prose make it easier for the reviewer to be critical. His is an enjoyable, stimulating, maddening book. It is based on much learning and contains many flashes of perception. But as an account of changing sentiment it is sadly flawed.

John Carey

Futility

Not Without Glory: Poets of the Second World War by VERNON SCANNELL *Woburn Press* £5.95

The notion that the second world war yielded no worthwhile poetry remains, according to Vernon Scannell, 'widespread, even among educated people'. Odd, that. For Keith Douglas and Alun Lewis, in particular, have received appreciative attention from the critics. Their works were republished with rather a fanfare ten years back, and Desmond Graham's fine biography of Douglas (not mentioned in Mr Scannell's text, and listed as a 'Prose Anthology' in his bibliography) might have been noticed, you'd think, by even casual perusers of the literary columns. Still, Mr Scannell has found the illusion persisting, and it's regrettable. Whether his book will put things right seems doubtful. His approach is dogmatic; his critical sympathy, minuscule.

To discourage over-prizers of the first world war poets, he begins with an account of Wilfred Owen's poetry which detects in it 'flatulent rhetoric' and 'a mish-mash of fustian and bathos'. Sassoon's influence on

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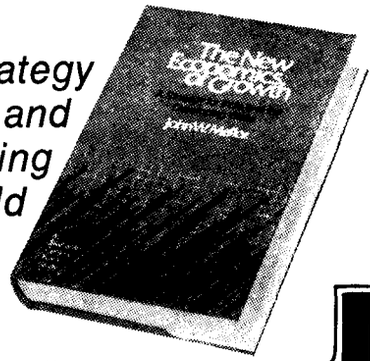

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Owen was, he feels, 'deleterious'. He jeers at Rupert Brooke, and dismisses 'If I should die . . .' (a poem that must have brought comfort to thousands, and, one might add, may have the edge in that respect on the Collected Works of Vernon Scannell), as 'sentimental advertising copy for good English fertiliser'.

From pleasantries of this sort he passes to a survey of the differences between first and second war servicemen. The former, it appears, were innocents. The latter had learnt that loyalty and obedience were 'manacles on the limbs of the oppressed', that heroes were 'homicidal psychopaths', and that women were 'as various and animal in their natures as men'. These insights were 'found everywhere among the armed forces in Britain'. Quite how he knows this, Mr Scannell doesn't say. His own experience, it seems, was limited to the Gordon Highlanders. His best poet, Douglas, utterly fails to fit in with his idea of a World War II serviceman – which is, he concedes, 'strange'.

The poets he discusses are generally the expectable ones: Douglas, Lewis, Keyes, Ross, Causley, Reed and – more surprisingly – Roy Fuller among the English; Simpson, Jarrell, Shapiro, Eberhart from the States. In dealing with them Mr Scannell's method is perfectly straightforward. To merit praise a poet should confine himself to words that will appeal to readers who 'have no liking for poetry *per se*', and should aim only at 'realistic direct observation'. Officers, where depicted, should manifest 'boastfulness, stupidity, prejudice and immaturity', since these were the marks of officers 'in all branches of the services'. Other ranks should be hard bitten, aware of the animal nature of women, etc. (see above).

It follows that when a poet uses his imagination he will be guilty of 'romantic poeticisms' or 'flatulent rhetoric' (see Owen); and that it will be unhealthy for him to be influenced by another poet rather than by 'reality'. Thus Keyes's poetry suffers from its debt to Rilke (who was, in any case, a 'relentless bore'). References to the fine arts should, of course, be avoided at all costs. F. T. Prince's 'Soldiers Bathing', for example, offends because it mentions Michelangelo and Pollaiuolo instead of concentrating on (as Mr Scannell puts it) 'the stink and violence of a world in arms'.

And so it goes on. Mr Scannell applies his two or three ideas with mechanical obtuseness, and the poems crumple before him. If one read only the quotations, on the other hand, it could be quite an enjoyable book. After a time I found myself leafing forward to spy out especially loved and subtle stanzas, and trying to guess what sort of a critical blockbuster Scannell would drop on them. It's a difficult game, for Scannell's insensitivity almost always outdoes expectation. Take this, for instance, from Causley's 'Song of the Dying Gunner A.A.I':

> Oh mother my mouth is full of stars
> As cartridges in the tray
> My blood is a twin-branched scarlet tree
> And it runs all away.

'Euphemistic,' pronounces Scannell: 'denies death's ugliness and finality through a vague literary pantheism.' You can't beat that.

It's maybe needless to add that Mr Scannell's severity defeats his avowed aim, for if ever a book were designed to reinforce the impression that World War II yielded no worthwhile poets, this is it. The only figure who gives him unalloyed pleasure, it seems, is the little-known American, Lincoln Kirstein (general director, after the war, of the New York City Ballet). Kirstein's affectation of the 'profane vernacular', as in 'One supple pipe from lip to prick,/One coiled long loop from mouth to ass', profoundly excites Mr Scannell. He also applauds Kirstein's social message, as evinced in his poem about a drink-crazed American officer who, running amok in a French café, puts a bullet through the ceiling and through the amiable wife of the landlord who is, by ill chance, slumbering above. This cautionary tale, Mr Scannell feels, 'rings with veracity like a sound coin on a bar'. Contrariwise, he fails, as might be expected, to respond to the complex and divided attitude to social privilege in Douglas's 'Aristocrats', where the yeomanry officers are seen as preposterous but heroic anachronisms:

> Peter was unfortunately killed by an 88:
> it took his leg away, he died in
> the ambulance.
> I saw him crawling on the sand; he said
> It's most unfair, they've shot my foot off.

'The note of petulance and the prep-school vocabulary are used,' Scannell glosses, to indicate the stricken officer's 'childishness'. Childishness! You'd think the thickest reader could see that it was courage Douglas wished to portray – the courage and pride that can remain flippant in the face of death. But probably Mr Scannell's prejudices would prevent him from admitting this even if he could see it. With readers who 'have no liking for poetry *per se*', his book should be a great hit.

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Bell

Peter Wilby

The Flamingo Lake

The Creighton Report by HUNTER DAVIES
Hamish Hamilton £4.95

After introducing us to Beatles and footballers, Mr Hunter Davies has turned from latter-day folk heroes to anti-heroes: comprehensive school teachers. This book, an account of a year in the life of a North London comprehensive, is an extended version of three long articles written for the *Sunday Times* in 1974. Mr Davies was accused of patronising his footballers, but he does not laugh at his teachers and, apart from a short sermon on how lucky they are to have such secure jobs, passes no judgments on them. This book is composed largely of interviews with teachers, all of whom want to tell Mr Davies (and his tape-recorder), first, what they think about discipline; second, what 'O' and 'A' level passes have been achieved; third, how they work themselves to exhaustion; and fourth, how it is, nevertheless, all tremendously exciting.

Teachers are like flamingoes: a magnificent sight in their natural habitat, inclined to inelegance and clumsiness out of it. Mr Davies has recorded them on dry land, attempting to articulate the richness and complexity of their classroom work and often succeeding only in reducing it to dispensable platitudes and arid generalisations. This is also a brief account of the author, himself a qualified teacher, grappling with a Creighton class. There are occasional vignettes of classroom life, illustrating how children behave when their teachers are talking to journalists. Otherwise, this book tells us next to nothing of what really matters in Creighton or any other school: what happens, day by day and week by week, in the classrooms. Mr Davies spent several hours of 'heavy concentration' trying to understand one teacher's theories of team teaching. Ought he not to have spent the time watching him teach?

But Mr Davies is too good a journalist to miss the drama of school life, the deviousness of its politics, the astonishing diversity of its personalities. And, in recording them, he tells us something central to the philosophy of comprehensive schools – though far better than any philosopher could. There is, for example, Mr Macdonald, the head of the third year, a rigid disciplinarian who says he once shouted out in a silent classroom just to see what would happen because 'the noise of biros writing had been driving me mad'. There is Alan Wood, a former Creighton tearaway, whose sensibilities are transformed by taking part in the school play as Mr Pugh in *Under Milk Wood*, and who has now returned to his old school as a teacher. There is Dave Matthews, maths teacher and anarchist, who 'likes kids' but doesn't agree with schools and leaves at the end of the year for a Welsh farming commune,

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more convinced than ever that teachers are preparing pupils 'for a capitalist, materialistic society'. There is Miss Stevens, who teaches commerce and makes the girls remove jewelry, make-up and high heels, and who also retires in the summer, handing Mr Davies a note that reads: 'I am sick and tired of pupil abuse, swearing, discourtesy, inattention, indifference to work – state education has in my opinion been completely ruined.'

Then there are the pupils: the sixth-former who lives with her boy friend in her parents' house, the ex-Westminster boy who joins the Creighton sixth form to get away from elitist education, the fifth-form political activist who, at 14, was sent by her parents to live with Polish relatives in Australia because she had got involved with black political groups.

With a community like that, how can you hope to agree rules, much less impose them? The teachers, according to a survey Mr Davies carried out, were evenly divided on the desirability of corporal punishment. A substantial minority would choose to send their own children to private or grammar schools. There was no consensus on the desirability of formal examinations. Those who demand that schools transmit clear agreed standards of social behaviour and attitudes to their pupils will see, from this book, that such standards no longer exist.

And the strength of schools like Creighton is that they make no attempt to pretend that they do. They are pluralistic not only in the differing abilities and social backgrounds of their pupils, not only in the wide choice of academic subjects and leisure activities, but also in their values and standards. What impressed Hunter Davies about Creighton was that it did not push or pressure its pupils. If they wanted to accumulate 'O' and 'A' levels, the opportunities were there; but, if they wanted to stand aside from the academic conveyor-belt, there was no complaint.

It is not the duty of secondary schools to inculcate the attitudes appropriate to pursuing university courses. It is not their duty to preach the Protestant ethic of hard work nor to transmit respect for authority nor, for that matter, to hold any special brief for democracy. Their job is to provide opportunities for pupils to acquire skills – some essential (which are, therefore, compulsory parts of the curriculum), others a matter of individual preference (and, therefore, optional). Creighton and other comprehensives, freed from the restrictions of a grammar-school system dominated by academic and middle-class values to the exclusion of all others, are slowly beginning to realise this.

Creighton's aims are, at once, more ambitious and more modest than those of traditional education. More ambitious in that it tries to allow every individual to realise the values and the talents that he considers appropriate to himself. More modest in that it is not attempting to produce a particular type of human being.

The social engineers are not the comprehensives, but the grammar schools. Far from creating uniformity across the nation, far from stamping out individuality and variety, comprehensive education is essentially pluralistic. Though he fails to get to the heart of the school, Hunter Davies illustrates this point vividly and often brilliantly. The faults of his book are the faults of most of what is written about education, too much waffle about classrooms, not enough description of them. The best of it is worth a hundred political tracts on comprehensives and a thousand theoretical works on school and classroom organisation. I doubt that anything better on secondary education will be published this year.

Stephen Koss

Boilermaker

Harry Pollitt by JOHN MAHON *Lawrence & Wishart* £6.00

Harry Pollitt, variously known to his contemporaries as 'the Bolshie' and 'Brother Pollitt', gamely described himself in his *Who's Who* entry as 'propagandist'. In private, however, he was proud to identify himself as 'a boilermaker, who likes his pint, his dram, his fish and chips'. His teacher at the Moravian Sunday School in Droylsden had thought him cut out to become a preacher. His father, who had 'done enough slogging my guts out for one family', intended him for a butcher. But, from his boyhood, Harry aspired to be a boilermaker, and he got his way.

His birth in 1890 was coincident with the rise of a New Unionism with which his career was entwined. A few weeks shy of his fifteenth birthday, he began his apprenticeship as a plater at the local Gorton Works, where he was 'fortunate enough to find amid the machines men who helped him to become a good craftsman, a staunch trade unionist and a Marxist socialist'. In January 1912, against a background of industrial turbulence, the Boilermakers Society enrolled him as first-class member No. 28030. His take-home pay at the time was £2 1s., which he recalled as 'the first slight easing from grinding poverty that my mother had ever experienced'.

Herself the grand-daughter of a Chartist, Harry's mother presented him with the first volume of Marx's *Capital* when he came of age in 1911. The same year he was elected secretary of the Openshaw Socialist Society and, in that capacity, supported a renegade socialist candidate in the municipal elections, thereby helping to deliver the seat to the Tories. He represented the boilermen at the 1921 TUC, and won plaudits from Ben Tillett for his 'fiery eloquence' in defence of the Red International of Labour Unions. At the next year's Congress, he unsuccessfully opposed the executive's recommendation to reject the Communists' application to affiliate. He already held an 'official position' in the fledgling Communist

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Party and, in 1929, after his futile bid to unseat Ramsay MacDonald at Seaham Harbour, he was appointed its general secretary.

Fortunately, he did not discard his tools. In 1941, when 'differences of opinion' over the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact brought his peremptory removal from the general secretaryship, he returned uncomplainingly to the trade. Hitler came to his rescue by attacking the Soviet Union in June 1941 and, on 8 August, Pollitt obtained his discharge from shipyard duty. Thereupon he resumed his command, which he kept until the spring of 1956, when he resigned on doctor's orders. The obligation to explain Khrushchev's revelations about Stalin's 'mistakes' had taken its toll, but at least he was spared the responsibility of championing Soviet intervention in Hungary.

Throughout these exciting decades, John Mahon stood devotedly at Pollitt's elbow. A member of the party executive, his father was a colleague of Engels and his family library boasted yet another prized copy of *Capital*. He first heard Pollitt speak 'on a wet Saturday afternoon in 1921' (Mahon never fails to provide a weather report), and stayed spellbound until he died last year, 'just after he had completed the last reference note and the last appendix' of this biographical tribute.

Like many labours of love, Mahon's work is unashamedly indulgent. It is much too long, its research is often haphazard, and its analysis is generally superficial. Chronology is not the author's strong suit: Pollitt gets to shake hands with Lenin in the chapter after he has carried the banner of the Communist International past Lenin's bier.

Nevertheless, for all its manifest faults, this is a remarkable document. Irrelevantly to its main purpose, it contains moving pen-portraits of numerous comrades who would otherwise go uncommemorated. By the same token, it provides an index to trade disputes, prosecutions and doctrinal squabbles. Best of all, because Mahon shared his subject's presumptions and prejudices, we are allowed to survey nearly 60 years of history through Pollitt's own blinkered vision.

Mahon betrays not a shade of embarrassment when events belie Pollitt's prophecies, or even when Pollitt finds himself tactically allied to those whom he had been bitterly denouncing. 'What a bloody hope!' Pollitt exclaimed in the mid-Twenties, when a Low cartoon mischievously depicted Churchill as leader of the Revolution. With the coming of the war, Pollitt became a grudging admirer of Churchill, at any rate until the ban on the *Daily Worker*, the organ of 'the only party that stood against fascism whether from Hitler or Churchill and Morrison'. Forced to admit that the Soviet-German pact took everyone in Britain – 'including the Communists' – by surprise, Mahon persists in blaming 'the capitalist press' for distorting it as an alliance. He speaks of 'the danger Finland represented' to the USSR, and avows that 'there was no divergence of aim between the British people fighting to crush fascism, and what the Soviet Union was doing in Poland'.

Invited by a 'capitalist' editor to express his views on the war, Pollitt replied: 'I am afraid you will never understand that a Communist can have differences with his Party and yet remain absolutely loyal to it and its declared policy.' His biographer, for one, understood perfectly; but his comprehension owed more to discipline than to intellect.

TAVISTOCK

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Foreword by Michael Shepherd

This timely book will cause controversy. The author advocates an open-minded approach to the understanding and management of mental illness. The assumptions of psychiatrists and anti-psychiatrists are questioned in this challenging book. 'If the standard of psychiatric practice is low, and I believe that it is, then we owe it to our patients, our health service, and to psychiatry to say so.'

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James Cameron

The Underside

The Seventh Gate by PETER GREAVE *Temple Smith* £3.75

Just 17 pages from the *end* of his autobiography Peter Greave tells us that he has got leprosy – an occurrence that many of us might well have rated a little higher in experience. It says everything for this vivacious and wild and wholly unself-pitying adventure story that somehow catching leprosy *is*, in fact, just one more of the sort of things that happen to people like Peter Greave. Everything else, he seems to say; why not that?

He says it with a bitter good-humour, and he leaves it to its right place in the narrative. To do it at all was a feat of great tenacity and bravery. Producing *The Seventh Gate* took two years, after leprosy had completely blinded and immobilised him, dictated painfully to a series of helpers and, presumably, scrupulously revised, since it has some very stylish moments of irony. One would not expect a leper so wrily to appreciate the rich paradoxes of life. It puts most of us to shame.

And what a life it was. It was lived mostly, though erratically, in India where he was born and spent his childhood in a family dominated by a father whose eccentricities seem to have bordered on the mad. It is curious how many writers of autobiographical or semi-autobiographical work reflect the looming presence of some surrealistically Uncle-Matthew-like figure, usually a father, whose oddities and extravagances are both repellent and obsessive.

Greave Senior was a Manchester commercial soldier-of-fortune who, at the time of his son's birth, appears to have been in a pretty affluent way of business in Calcutta. Subsequently his affairs became totally chaotic; his fanatic energy and hopeless gullibility fluked him into fortunes and almost at once into bankruptcy. He appears to have been a sort of Mr Micawber with a streak of sadism, and he deserted his family as often as he sustained it. He had one further disadvantage: he was a compulsive flasher, given to episodes of indecent exposure, which in itself was not conducive to a tranquil domestic life.

India dug itself deep into Peter Greave's life, infecting him from boyhood with this person-place identification that so many Europeans find impossible to shake off. However, by and by this awful Greave *père* drove himself quite out of business there, and dragged his family to South Africa, to New York, where again he threw himself into all manner of lunatic and useless enterprises, including small-time bootlegging in the Prohibition days. The family hung together somehow, drooping lower and lower in the social and financial scale – wholly, according to Peter Greave, by the almost inhuman tolerance of his mother, whom he draws as a being of patient and mournful loveliness, resigned and despairing, simultaneously resolute and forlorn.

Back again at last to India, which at least was better than the Bronx, if only because its melancholies were more familiar. Peter Greave and his brother were sent to a macabre Anglo-Indian boarding-school in Darjeeling. There is a very telling picture of a gruesome Himalayan Dotheboys Hall, which Peter Greave endured until he could stand it no longer, when he escaped. The tale of that escape across Bengal – hitch-hiking, stowing away on trains and ships, evading police, living on a handful of annas – is to my mind classic boys'-adventure-story plus intricate adult perception: superb stuff.

The chronology does, to be sure, become obscure. We next find the family living in a godown outside Madras, penniless, indeed at the economic level of those around them: bathing in the river, eating padi. The young Peter Greave, plodding from one mean job to another, certainly saw more of the underside of India than most Europeans. It was his place, nevertheless.

It was in the summer of 1939, when he was in his twenties, that Peter Greave noticed these curious excrescences and swellings about his body. In South India there were many inconclusive diagnoses. Just before the

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war broke out, in Calcutta, he was told he had leprosy. His last, and most poignant pages, describe the terrible complication and fatigue of returning to England, in wartime. Years later, when the thing had done its worst, he wrote his book, with perception, compassion, even humour:

> Mankind has suffered under countless scourges, many more lethal and painful than leprosy, but they differ in one all-important characteristic. Cancer, syphilis, cholera, multiple sclerosis and a score of others bring death and destruction, but they do not evoke the terror and revulsion produced by leprosy . . . Leprosy makes no effort to conceal its ability to mutilate and disfigure, but rather inflicts its sentence with an insolent disregard for human sensitivity. Because its handiwork is so visible, its victims since time began have been branded. . . . The irony is that we now know most of these fears were unnecessary. 'Leprosy is the hardest disease to catch, and the easiest to cure.' . . . The disease can now be rendered non-infectious in a matter of weeks.

I think I can endorse that; I lived for many weeks with lepers in Africa, in the Indian Ocean. But it does not change that the courageous Peter Greave today has no eyes and no hands. He has also not got what he probably misses most: the smell of the bazaar.

John Naughton

Lab Lib

Force of Knowledge: The Scientific Dimension of Society by JOHN ZIMAN *Cambridge* £7.50

Professor Ziman's admirable book has risen, Phoenix-like, from the ashes of a disaster: to wit, the degeneration of the British Society for Social Responsibility in Science into a species of ideological talking-shop. Ziman was one of those relatively eminent scientists who regarded the BSSRS benignly in its early days, but subsequently became alarmed by its decline and retreated to academe. Unlike many of his contemporaries, however, Professor Ziman was unable to maintain the pretence that the intellectual ferment which found expression in the BSSRS counted for nought. (Indeed, in 1968 he himself helped to illuminate the debate with an elegant little book, *Public Knowledge*.) So he set about preparing a course of lectures on the social relations of science for second-year students of physics, chemistry and biology in the University of Bristol. This course has been given annually since 1971, and Professor Ziman now offers an expanded version of his material in the form of a beautifully illustrated, 374-page book.

He begins with those objections to science which were once regarded as unthinkable – allegations that scientists are selfish, irresponsible and arrogant; that scientific knowledge is grossly misused and that mankind already knows too much for its own good. He thinks it desirable that undergraduate scientists should be confronted with these views and encouraged to think them through. But,

> to think constructively about these matters, it is necessary to know a little bit about the nature of science as a human activity. It is not sufficient to understand the discoveries that scientists have made . . .; we must also learn to see scientific research as an integral part of the modern way of life. Rational debate on the political and moral issues concerning science and its place in society should be staged against some backcloth of facts and agreed principles. The aim of this book is to sketch out a background for such debates.

Implicit in this scheme, of course, are twin dangers: of moral sermonising on the one hand, and of trying to be encyclopaedic on the other. In the event, Professor Ziman has managed to avoid both: he knows that there are no general answers to the moral dilemmas posed by modern science, and he does not attempt any. Instead, he provides case studies, documents, exemplars and anecdotes which highlight the issue under discussion. The emphasis throughout is not on peddling solutions but on making the reader think. Thus Professor Ziman does not propound a personal view on the perennial question of whether 'science' precedes 'technology', but instead gives two examples (the telescope and electromagnetism) where 'pure' scientific innovation preceded technological exploitation and two (steam power and plant breeding) where it did not. *Caveat lector.*

Force of Knowledge is therefore more of an intellectual *smorgasbord*, designed to be sampled and savoured, than a linear text. The 14 chapters cover a wide spectrum of topics, ranging from the basic groundwork on science as a social institution through the economics of modern research to the relationship between science and industrial innovation, science and war, and even 'the sciences of society'. Professor Ziman has an unerring eye not only for the great issues, but also for detail: when discussing the costs of scientific research, for example, he is not content merely to cite aggregated official statistics but also includes details of the staffing and allied costs of a typical university science department – his own. Scattered throughout the book are innumerable small but fascinating insights – things like the chart showing how scientific distinction (in terms of Nobel prizes) tends to run in intellectual 'families' of research students and their famous supervisors.

Any book as individualistic as this is bound to attract some criticism. There will be those, for example, who will lament the absence of any explicit treatment of the epistemological problems of scientific research. Likewise, it is a pity that the discussion of IQ testing does not mention the recent American work on the ideological background of the original research. But compared to the magnificent achievement which Professor Ziman's book represents, such criticisms look very small indeed.

Among this week's contributors:

KEITH THOMAS is Fellow and Tutor in Modern History at St John's College, Oxford; among his publications is *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (1971).

PETER WILBY is working on a series of studies of new universities.

JAMES CAMERON's publications include two volumes of autobiography, *Point of Departure* and *An Indian Summer*, which was published last year.

PETER PORTER will be reviewing radio regularly.

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Valentine Cunningham

Rooms at the Top

Reasons of State by ALEJO CARPENTIER translated by Frances Partridge *Gollancz* £4.95

The President's Mistress by PATRICK ANDERSON *Secker & Warburg* £3.90

You're Not Alone: A Doctor's Diary by WILLIAM COOPER *Macmillan* £3.95

Getting into the minds of the chieftains of totalitarian power, understanding megalomania from inside the megalomaniac, is a task fiction rarely sets itself. The Hitlers and Goebbelses themselves tend, of course, to abandon any early aesthetic plots for other scenarios, leaving their victims, the Kafkas, to write the novels. And it clearly takes a peculiarly set imagination to press convincingly beyond the victim's view or the mere externalia – the stuff that launches a thousand biographies and histories per decade – actually to inquire what it's like right inside the padded-cell of the dictator's head. Solzhenitsyn has ventured it with Lenin, and Richard Hughes with Hitler. Alejo Carpentier, in an extraordinarily arresting, richly brewed and complexly ordered new novel (his first for 12 years), puts up the exuberantly baroque Head of State of a minor Latin American country.

The opening of *Reasons of State* finds Head of State (as he knows himself in both of his narrative modes, the first and the third person) enjoying the best that pre-World War I Paris can supply by way of high culture and exotically cultivated sex. At the opera or brothel the President's old-fashioned theories and practices are abetted and condoned by the great and the snobbish, from a Distinguished Academician to d'Annunzio. But libertarian rebellions 'over there' dinge the civilised idyll and he rushes home to quell them. The cultivated Francophiliac butchers his opponents as bloodily as any ancient Spanish invader, and when war breaks out he feeds his people German atrocity stories while continuing brutally to repress his country's Reds. When post-war North American civilisation arrives in the form of inflation, Fords, pianolas, concrete, and toffee-making machines, he and his family are still salting away illicit personal fortunes, and still sponsoring culture. With its grandiose Capitol and Theatre his Capital is an 'Opera-City', 'the Capital of Fiction': and while Caruso cavorts, the subversives are suffering by rope, garrot, strappado, defenestration and concrete waistcoat at the new model prison. The tortures strike Head of State only two-dimensionally, as the stained-glass martyrdoms which hagiography has schooled him in.

All this might, of course, amount to just another leery look at messy South American politickings in the familiar way of novels from Conrad to Greene. But, noticeably, it's European characteristics and dilemmas that are being scrutinised in Head of State's country: it is a Spanish clime (whose proud rosters of virgins fill pages), its leaders love French and Italian arts and fight on Roman or German models. In Paris, 'over there' means South America, but in the Americas 'over there' means France. And the novel bonds South America and France inextricably together, so eventually it's European reaction that the novel is calling in question. This awareness, however, comes only gradually home to the reader, and summary mustn't imply that these analytically dry bones are all. On the contrary, the writing makes a continually intoxicating bravura, giddying with imaginative inventiveness (who else since Dickens, for instance, would have soldiers vengefully machine-gunning the wax shop-window mannequins during a shopkeepers' strike?), strong on social history, slyly jibing about Catholicism and conservative politics, continuously – page after page after page – enticing.

Much less inventive – because it's calqued on familiar journalistic exposures and takes us round and about but rarely into the presidential confidence – Patrick Anderson's *The President's Mistress* seems quite conventionally pitched after Carpentier's dizzying agilities. Nonetheless it reads more than grippingly enough. A young American lawyer is disconcerted first by the mysterious death of a girl friend who's been dating the US President on the quiet, and then further thrown by signs that President Whitmore's stick-at-nothing aides are trying a cover-up. On this occasion the guilty are the President's men (subject incidentally of a Sixties study by Patrick Anderson: which helps explain the knowing confidence of his handling), rather than the President himself, but otherwise the novel is a kind of Watergate re-run. Curiously, though, the utterly loyal and very tough dirty-tricks merchant, the crook lawyer with high ambitions, and the fearless conspiracy-theorising journalist prove they're still plentifully endowed with mileage. The sex helps, naturally, especially since most of the characters are helped to it, or help themselves to it in liberal dollops. There's lots of evidence, potential readers will be cheered to learn, for Linda Lovelace's allegations about what constitutes *le vice américain* (and she should know), as well as a fetchingly farcical chase in which the journalist, pursued by the torch-toting tough, takes refuse in a gay flick-house and the novel lingers dotingly on the busy scenes the torch-beam picks out. Occasionally the heart-searching the hero is put through reads a bit like unnecessarily goofy breast-beating ('Norton was torn by uncertainty, was he being carried away by his passions?') and the degree of political innocence the novel assumes to lie out there waiting to be perturbed is sometimes too unbelievably much ('Penny blinked in confusion . . . "Can they *do* that?" '). But all told it's a distinguished political novel.

The ageing, diarising medic of William Cooper's latest novel charts an affair with a girl of 20-odd against the finickily kept-up gardening record of the floral activity at his country cot. He's obsessed with older morphs, but hanging looser about elastic sexuality. He calmly annotates the professional doings of the sexologists he mixes with (there's an odd couple known to the trade as P & Q, or Prick and Quim) but his own girlie's antics soon start to throw him. The push-off comes inevitably but hintfully in the shape of Larkin's manual for veteran voyeurs, *High Windows*: like the novel, the characters are certainly well-bred in a bookish sort of way.

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Theatre

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Play, That Time, Footfalls *Royal Court*
Confusions *Apollo*
The Non-Stop Connolly Show *Almost Free*

Anyone who expects a new serenity from the 70-year-old Beckett should go and be disabused by the birthday celebrations at the Court. His spiritual migraine is worse than ever. In *Waiting for Godot* the two main characters had a jaunty resilience about them. They shared a gallows humour, and even seemed to care for one another. There was a faint possibility that Godot, God, life-force, Great White Father, call him what you will, might eventually emerge from his hideaway; and certainly he was real enough to send a messenger to announce his non-arrival. But now, 21 years later, there is no laughter, no sharing or caring, and nothing to hope for from the infinite void beyond. Nothing, that is, except death, which is to be desired as an escape from that grief and paranoia, those slavish obsessions, banal memories and hopeless fantasies that constitute the everyday furniture of a man's consciousness. Meanwhile, the most he can do in self-defence is to cultivate impersonality, pretending to himself he's an object, an 'it', or at any rate someone else. Those who deaden themselves with emotional novocaine may at least hope to feel less than the usual quota of pain.

This was the rough conclusion of *Not I*, which the Court presented three years ago, and nothing more conciliatory emerges from his latest playlets, *That Time* and *Footfalls*, both of which seem as dark and stark as Beckett's precise, elegant despair can make them. A lifetime's experience shrinks to a babbling mouth, a ravaged head, or a haggard figure frantically prowling to and fro. These beings speak of themselves, to themselves: the stage (it seems) is the inside of their skulls, the characters their withered brain cells, and the drama their scrambled thoughts. This is the theatre of total introversion – and yet, surprisingly, the audience is left with a strong objective sense of the wretched lives on display. Late Beckett may be austere, but he is not abstract. You can piece together a life-history, or at least a case-study, from the hints he shyly feeds us. If you felt philistine enough, you could even rewrite *Not I* and *That Time* as documentaries, and sell them to one of the more socially-conscious directors on BBC-1.

The subject of *Not I* is the sort of gaunt, bent woman you sometimes see tottering along the street, eyes down, string round her waist, a carrier-bag in her hand. Though Beckett showed us nothing but her writhing lips, we could readily visualise the rest of her. Similarly, all we see in *That Time* is Patrick Magee's face, eyes mostly shut, hair flaring backwards as if he were some unearthly blend of Ibsen in his wild old age and the Michelangelo God. But here is another tramp, another tale of disintegration. Magee himself doesn't actually speak, but his recorded voice comes from all parts of the stage, variously telling us of childhood truancy, an abortive attempt to revisit the ruined tower where he used to hide, a love-affair that turns out to have occurred only in his imagination, and a latter-day existence spent snoozing in public libraries, and avoiding contact with his 'fellow bastards'. The memories sprawl into each other, in a drowsy, unpunctuated murmur; but the final impression is very vivid. You can see this stumbling, staring creature in his 'old green greatcoat', and understand why people cross the road when he bears down on them.

Is this a man free-associating on his deathbed? Certainly, the hoarse, painful breathing that intersperses the monologue suggests this: so does the ending, which settles Magee's mouth into a hideous, grinning rictus, the frozen sneer of a stone satyr. Again, is the doleful hag Billie Whitelaw plays in *Footfalls* actually a ghost – or a second Miss Havisham, nursing some ancient trauma? Up and down she tramps, up and down, head bowed, matted hair dangling, dress in grey-green tatters, skeletal fingers clawing at her own shoulders, and, on the evidence offered, either or both of these conclusions could be correct. But it seems literal-minded to pursue such questions too far. What matters is that Mr Magee's old man has hardly had a life, and Miss Whitelaw's madwoman not had one at all. She has, instead, fallen victim to some strange and obscure fixation: her mind is dizzy with memories of a church at evensong, the bizarre notion that she must hear the sound of her own feet, and the plaintive, uncomprehending demands of her invalid mother. She can, I suspect, be found in many mental wards, everlastingly worrying away at problems that defy solution: a living spectre, unable to leave the scene of its suffering.

Though Beckett's most recent creations might have stumbled out of some searing social exposé by Jeremy Sandford, they wouldn't interest him unless they had a wider significance as well; and that may provoke resistance from those members of the audience who haven't been hauled into hospital to be 'wiped off and straightened out', like the derelict in *That Time*, or have yet to stand open-mouthed and drooling in front of a magistrate, like the peasant woman in *Not I*. Isn't there something presumptuous in identifying the bulk of mankind with this human driftwood? No more so, I think, than in Francis Bacon's suggestion, graphically made on canvas after canvas, that the world is an abattoir and men raw meat. Late Beckett writes with a grim beauty, using sharp, concentrated and resonant images of deprivation and anguish to draw attention to the human waste we see all around us, if usually in a less extreme form. What worries me isn't his insistence on this waste, but his apparent belief that there's no point doing anything about it – in a godless universe man might as well withdraw into himself and slowly rot. *That's* the pass to which Beckett's pessimism has brought him at the age of 70: I don't think there'll be much blowing of squeakers and dancing round the cake at his birthday party.

The evening also includes a fine revival of his *Play*, the one that shows you three heads protruding from urns and then stings your ears with the adulteries committed by their bodies. They are trapped in a triangle that seems more literally eternal than most. At any rate, they tell us their sordid story once, then repeat it word for word, and would presumably still be at it if the curtain hadn't fallen, cutting off the flow. Marriage, it seems, is institutionalised disaster, a view not so different from the one Alan Ayckbourn puts forward in the 'entertainment' he calls *Confusions*. In his first sketch, a distracted child-ridden wife receives some adult visitors as if they were six-year-olds, forcing them to drink their nice milk and make up their beastly quarrels. In the second, her sottish husband fails to seduce two icy bitches in a hotel. The third, too, is about infidelity and lack of love. Throughout his writing career, Ayckbourn's pine-panelled Romeos and Juliets and chintz-covered Darbys and Joan have been at odds with each other, and the odds are becoming greater and nastier. His latest play, yet to be seen in London, actually has a man and his mother driving a young wife insane. She spends the last act in a catatonic stupor, the victim of a degree of conjugal insensitivity that would surprise even Beckett.

Yet we're meant to laugh, and we usually oblige, though in an increasingly nervous, uncomfortable way. *Confusions* isn't the best opportunity to generalise about Ayckbourn, because five playlets don't give him much time to develop character or establish milieu; but, in its minor way, it re-emphasises that he's prepared to take risks, both comic and technical, that would flummox many a more pretentious playwright. Consider how much fun he extracts from the tricky expedient of limiting a marital fracas in a restaurant to what the waiter can hear as he gravely offers menus or serves soup. That scene seems to me the success of the evening, though the audience laughed most at a hurly-burly fête in which the humour is broader, less cutting, sometimes less original. The idea of advertising intimacies over a loudspeaker comes from *Mash*, the near electrocution of a gracious lady from Ayckbourn's own *Absurd Person Singular*. Never mind: John Alderton (nice as a po-faced serving-man and a flailing seducer) and Pauline Collins (very ditto as a bridling prickteaser, a mother one inch of unnatural calm from total breakdown, and much else) play it all with zest and wit and a sly eye for the seamier side of marriage.

Meanwhile, *The Non-Stop Connolly Show*, a potted biography of the great Irish socialist, continues at the Almost Free. I am notoriously resistant to that combination of didacticism, bad rhymes, folksiness and revivalist bounce in which the authors, John Arden and Margaretta D'Arcy, now specialise; but there are, I agree, more indigestible ways of spending a lunchtime.

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Films

John Coleman

Derring-Done

Robin and Marian *Leicester Square Theatre*
Sky Riders *Rialto* and *Odeon, Kensington*
Escape from the Dark *Odeon, St Martin's Lane*
Galileo *Curzon*

Two soldiers, bucket-shaped helmets almost clashing together, scrabble in some foreign soil after a large rock; they stagger away to place it in the spoon of a trebuchet; the machine fires and the stone bounces wetly off a castle wall. Vintage Richard Lester, one would be right in thinking. Yet, just before this, at the absolute outset of his *Robin and Marian,* we have been shown three apples on a platter, first green, then withered, rotting: an admonition. (If you asked me how I liked them apples, the answer would be, not much; but their symbolism is a minor flaw.) The point is that it will be very wrong if Mr Lester is taken to task for keeping a straighter face than usual. Later, a guard back in Nottingham has trouble unknotting the cord which lowers a portcullis, and there are other small amusements, not least in the saltier dialogue exchanges. The script is by James Goldman, who numbers among his credits such varied items as *The Lion in Winter, They Might be Giants* and *Nicholas and Alexandra,* and its prevailing tone is elegiac: *that* is what is important about Mr Lester's latest film. It is perhaps closer in feeling to that affectionately remembered curiosity of Franklin Schaffner's, *The War Lord,* than to anything else. Robin (Sean Connery) and his faithful Little John (Nicol Williamson) are fed up with the brutalities of the Crusades, and on the wrong side of 40: they decide to come home, to their beloved Sherwood Forest. There they meet a couple of the old crew, Will Scarlett (Denholm Elliott) and Friar Tuck (Ronnie Barker). Says minstrel Will, 'Everywhere we go they want to hear about the things you did'. Greybeard Robin looks at him wrily: 'We never did them.'

This line is picked up further on when evil Sir Ranulf (Kenneth Haigh) beseeches Ian Holm's sybaritic King John for more men to put down the returned Robin's growing new band of followers: 'Have you ever tried to fight a legend?' Memories of Fairbanks, Flynn, Richard Greene: these are all part of the *cinematic* legend Lester, at least in places, has set out to combat. Of course, there are excellent scenes of derring-do: arrows fly, that portcullis is painfully scaled, and there is a last, panting battle to the death between Robert Shaw's canny, rather sympathetic Sheriff of Nottingham and Connery, hauled by pride out of his forest stronghold. Most people could probably have done with more of this. The movie's title, however, is not there for nothing. Maid Marian, exquisitely played by Audrey Hepburn, has become abbess of a nearby priory during Robin's long absence and is about to surrender herself to the authorities under John's edict against the higher clergy. One bad, lyric moment in a cornfield apart, their revived love, moving from flyting to affection to the final sequence where Marian poisons both herself and her dying man, is a tour de force, managed with magnificent dignity and conviction by actors and director alike. By then, I could even – just about – take Marian's curtain speech. The entire cast (which includes Richard Harris as King Richard, killed off early) performs impeccably, unselfishly. Damn those apples, though, shoved up again at the end: Robin's death-bed arrow, followed in flight to a speck in the sky, would have done me.

Douglas Hickox's last outing was that ludicrous advertisement for tourist London and John Wayne, *Brannigan. Sky Riders,* written by too many people, is another of those clotted, *nouveau-riche* affairs in which some terrorist outfit (here called the World Activists Revolutionary Army) kidnaps the wife and kids of a very rich man, makes grotesque financial demands, and then sits around waiting to be caught. 'Do not underestimate the level of their insanity,' intones Charles Aznavour as a cocksure Greek police inspector. Meanwhile, as Athens-based Robert Culp goes about raising the required ready for wife Susannah York and brood, staunch, toothy James Coburn (York's previous husband and father of her son) turns up: and trumps at that. The bonuses are as follows: some detective work by smug Kenneth Griffith on a snap of the captives, which identifies the mountain-top hide-out; the really tremendous stunt flying by a group of hang-glider maniacs, both dizzy and pretty to witness; the way old Coburn, after hideous heroics, is rather walked away from; and the incredible, one-damn-thing-after-another aplomb of the director, as if he had simply failed to notice the sieve-like plot entrusted to him. The usual minus: this glibness about presumably Third World activists is very unradical chic.

Charles Jarrott's *Escape from the Dark,* made largely for children under Disney auspices, is set in the Yorkshire mining village of Emsdale in 1909, with sweeping landscapes and pithead machinery excellently photographed by Paul Beeson. No *Kameradschaft,* but then Mr Jarrott is hardly Herr Pabst, this well-written story (by Rosemary Anne Sisson) is more about those 'wretched blind pit ponies' in that Hodgson poem some of us piously intoned at school than about the appalling conditions of the men at the coal-face: yet, to be fair, humans have their harsh appearances as well. The local pit, owned by Lord Harrogate (Alastair Sim, and grim for him, until a merryish picnic at the close), is losing money. His manager, Sandman (Peter Barkworth), realises the underground ponies must go to make way for mechanisation. Sandman's daughter Alice chums up with two young miners' sons, already illegally going down the mine to help feed the animals: learning their destination is the slaughterhouse, the trio contrive to smuggle them away via a disused mine shaft. The activity of getting the necessary engine going is nicely handled; the kids are attractive and plausible; Geraldine McEwan, as the ultimate in refined governesses, has about eight words and elongates them deliciously into monologues. The business about the men coming out on strike is more than somewhat fudged and uneasy: arguably, it could provide food for thought in an intelligent child, or adult.

Joseph Losey's *Galileo,* made two years ago, is a film of the Charles Laughton version of the Brecht. Losey directed the play in Hollywood and New York as long ago as 1947 and was even then discussing with Brecht and Laughton the possibility of filming it (for further details, see an article by Richard Combs in the Summer 1975 issue of *Sight and Sound).* Topol is normally one of my pet synonyms for ham: here he gives a pretty good account of the awkward, sometimes fraudulent genius that was Galileo. Great credit must go to Mr Losey for this, as well as for several of the better, stylised fragments. Edward Fox, as the sinister Cardinal Inquisitor, and Michel Lonsdale, as the at first sympathetic Cardinal Barberini who changes even as he dons the garb of Pope, are outstanding in support. Never having seen the Brecht staged, I suspect quite a few of the irritations I experienced with this production belong to the text (its use of doggerel commentaries, its song-and-dance sequence): one is never sure what form one's alienation is supposed to take. Detached, critical interest? That road very often leads to uncritical boredom. But this is a respectable occasion, here and there – as where we wait with Galileo's daughter and acolytes to know if he has recanted – rising to the heights.

Television

Dennis Potter

Poisonous Gas

For days now, the irritating words of an irritating tune have been going round and round the mouldering interior of my head like tired wasps circling the remnants of an abandoned cream-bun. 'No Two People have ever Bin so in love Bin so in love, Bin so in love, No Two People have ever Bin so in love as my lovey-dove and I –' and then all over once again, her lovey-dove, his lovey-dovey and me. I do not wish to deny the manifold pleasures of such great passion, but its tinkling repetition is surely an excessive punishment for watching *The Black and White Minstrel Show* (BBC-1) right through from sugary beginning to sickly end on Saturday evening.

It is not so much the potency of cheap music that alarms me as its promiscuity: the plink-ploink of the off-screen band and the ban-an-an-ality of the lyrics have since intruded into the most guarded recesses and the most private moments, a chime of Bin-so like a call from the great icecream van on high. There was, for example, an affecting programme about cancer patients on BBC-2 on Monday (called *Dying,* rather to the delight of the other channels) which ended with a dressed corpse in a coffin, a glisten of tears in the eyes of my wife and eldest child, and a dumb stupor on my own part

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in which Bin-so in love tripped gaily across the back of an addled brain. The nearest and most horrible analogy to the effect of this maddening chorus, perhaps, is to the original nerve gases developed and stockpiled by the Germans during the last war, all of which so successfully devastated the microchemistry at the nerve endings that a victim was left with no means of stopping muscle action once the muscles had been activated. (They even had ways of making us dance, it seems.)

The Black and White Minstrel Show is a programme specialising in noxious syncopations which are all made to sound as if they come from the palsied hand of one and the same cretinous tunesmith. There are no real distinctions, therefore, between a jolly dance, a lugubrious 'country' number, a sweet old folk-song or even an evangelical hymn. On Saturday, for instance, the renowned West Country song 'Widdicombe Fair' was delivered in bland mid-Atlantic accents by a choir standing on a polished stairway that led from nowhere to nowhere missing out old uncle Tom Cobley and all. Blacked-up minstrels and stripped-down dancers prance and mime around a vaguely geometric set under a paper moon and ochre skies, lacking any sort of vigour which might otherwise overcome the contradictions of place and time and mood and music that make the programme so laughable.

But why on earth expose my precious self to such poisonous gases in the first place? Or even compound the distress by tuning in to (and staying with) *It's a Knockout* (BBC-1), *Husband of the Year* (ITV), *The Money Programme* (BBC-2), *Crossroads* (ITV) and other such low-minded drivel?

I decided that my last column for a few months would have richer flavours if I took heed of some characteristic sentences from Martin Amis which I came across while shredding a back number of *The New Review* the other Bin-so day. The splinter off the old block was confiding what he called 'a mild suspicion' that

> intelligent people would rather watch anything at all than intelligent television – that indeed they pine for the rubbishy, frivolous and ephemeral . . . it is only the TV critic, that unhappy figure, who actually wants to watch all those documentaries on the recreation facilities for Stuttgart-based immigrant workers, all those regional plays about the illegitimate offspring of paraplegic pet-shop owners.

The tone of voice is recognisable in others, the attitude of mind is shared by many who work in television, and the level of its response helps to explain why a derivative and second-rate novel can often lay more claim to attention or respect than good programmes which shunt and bump across the schedules before disappearing for ever into the night. The latest of the many treasons of the clerks, in fact, lies in just this amused disdain for a box that can be plugged into the same socket as a hairdryer or a coffee percolator. The rubbishy, frivolous and ephemeral are fit enough for such a contraption, are they not? Certainly it would not be possible to advance the mildest of suspicions that 'intelligent people' (hello there) would rather read anything at all than intelligent books, or at least not to put it forward in a literary journal which in other matters accepted that the task of the critic is to attempt to discriminate (with reasons) between what seems to be good and what feels to be bad.

The unhappy television critic lost in the arid Stuttgart of the soul occasionally ends up clowning with his readers because he, too, is infected with the mild Amis suspicion about what the intelligent want to see on their screens, and so turns his pieces into complicit sniggering about precisely those vast areas of television which tend to make it a mere device to pass the time. I believe the ailment is also called the Clive James Syndrome, but only in its more chronic manifestations.

'Do you mean,' quavered an incredulous crew member on the starship, 'that one of the people who threw the *Enterprise* a thousand light years is on board and killing our people?' 'Exactly,' came the answer, on the nod, tightening the tension in the *Star Trek* episode celebrated here last week. A useful scrap of dialogue which emphasises that the best thing to do in such circumstances is to get off the ship for a while, even if it means leaping into the summer doldrums with only an excruciating pun as a life support system – and that (Bin-so Bin-so Bin-so) is what my present aim is.

Radio

Peter Porter

Up North

Returning, Bourbonlike, to the reviewing of radio, after some years away, I found that while I had not learned anything in the interim, I had certainly forgotten a lot. Forgotten how uncertain comedy can be over the air (*Week Ending*, Radio 4); how remorseless a whole Saturday and Sunday of Radio Three pursuing one topic is (*Northern Weekend*); and how exciting great poetry sounds if properly spoken and unfettered by gimmicks or production excesses (*The Book of Job*, Radio 3). *Northern Weekend* was much less successful than its sister marathons devoted to Italy and Germany. At every turn, it was dogged by that fatal self-consciousness which divides England into North and South. The summing-up programme, *A View from the North*, even got bogged down trying to decide where the north began – Barnet, the Peak District, the Lincolnshire pea fields?

One tended to hear clichés and equally clichéd paradoxes in any programme which was more words than music. Ken Dodd sounded fine in a recording made on the northern circuit, but back in the studio analysing *The Northern Comic* he was flat and academic. Perhaps people really are doomed to become their own archetypes. 'We in the north speak the Queen's English,' Dodd said, and added, 'It's a pity she can't understand us'. It was all too easy to understand Bill Purdie explaining Geordies to their fellow-countrymen in *The Mouth of the Tyne*. Can one be charmed by self-deprecation masquerading as aggression? Anybody who knows anything about music recognises Charles Avison as a brilliant and original composer. That he lived all his life in Newcastle is no more surprising than Bach's living in Leipzig. But that was before Northern self-consciousness became total. This same self-consciousness was least debilitating in the most genuinely northern circumstances. Three programmes called *This Other English* were devoted to poetry in dialect – some of it almost impenetrable to my ear, but all of it technically resourceful and totally free of self-regard. Perhaps Radio 3 is ready for a London weekend: the opportunities for thundering truisms and relentless *radio verité* must be irresistible.

Pamela Gravett, who arranged the Book of Job for broadcasting, preceded it with a talk on *Job and the Modern Writers*. Her examples were rather dispiriting; she did emphasise, however, the fascination of this wonderfully perverse prose-poem. Her adaptation could not have been simpler. She allotted a voice to each part and she gave the story to a narrator. For the rest, she merely edited the 42 chapters to a manageable length. The musical score, by Terence Allbright, was inadequate but distracting, and many of the minor roles were badly hammed. Yet the result was magnificent, partly owing to the Authorised Version's wilful grandeur and partly to Paul Scofield's playing of Job himself.

It's been documentary time on Radio 4. *Nine Days Wonder*, on the General Strike, had the sort of fairness inspired by wisdom after the event. Not even the voices of those who lived through the Strike, such as Lord Brockway, could lend urgency to the events. Painful history can be homogenised too. The series on famous women on trial, running under the heading *Scandal*, is also rather too bland, but does not over-dramatise or over-explain. Frank Windsor's narration is exemplary – the role of the narrator is something I'll be returning to when considering Edgar Lustgarten in the Patty Hearst documentary. Every narrator is at the mercy of his script-writer, but Windsor

John Mole

Con Amore

She practises the clarinet,
her back turned to a spacious window.

No sound reaches the garden.
Music, on a stalk of silence,

waves behind glass.
She turns her own pages.

Phrase by phrase
the theme is moment only

as the flowers all know
inclined towards her.

Love must blossom on its stalk
before she hears it,

and the pages turn
like a white rose opening.

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can remove knowingness from his words, while adding significance where it is needed. In the two cases so far, those of Madeleine Smith, accused of poisoning her lover in Glasgow in 1857, and Mrs Barney, accused of shooting hers in London in 1932, the sting has been in the tail of the story. Miss Smith received a not proven verdict and Mrs Barney was acquitted – we learned that a visitor to a London house in the Nineties, thinking he recognised a familiar face among the servants, asked Madeleine Smith whether she would have done the same over again. She said yes. A living voice from the past categorised Mrs Barney. It was Barbara Cartland, who had followed the trial at the time. It was chilling to hear her bell-like tones assuring us that the lady was guilty and that only the forensic genius of Sir Patrick Hastings got her off.

Patty Hearst – Rebel or Victim? was a blockbuster of a documentary. It ran for two hours and it called upon all the American actuality available – tapes of Patty's voice, of Cinque of the Symbionese Liberation Army, of Patty's parents and of police officials. Into this was woven much tendentious comment, studio dramatisations and even a potted history of Grandfather Hearst, together with suggested parallels between his wilfulness and Patty's. Cinque's line of theatrical rhetoric was deeply depressing ('She is being held under the International Codes of War'), but worse still was the outside broadcast of the shoot-out in Los Angeles where the whole SLA, except for Patty and one family, were wiped out by the police. At the end Patty's story remained a mystery, buried under too bizarre a mountain of fact. Lustgarten's narration was always egregious, but the script didn't help him. In parts it was the purest lending-library cliché.

Records

Charles Fox

Chicks Only

Adelaide Hall: Hall of Ellington *Columbia SCX 6586* £2.99
Elisabeth Welch *World Records SH233* £1.80
Connie Boswell: Sand In My Shoes *MCA MCFM2739* (mono) £2.99
Maria Muldaur: Sweet Harmony *Reprise K54059* £2.99
Peggy Lee: Mirrors *A & M AMLH64547* £2.99
Phoebe Snow: Second Childhood *CBS81162* £2.99
Patti Smith: Horses *Arista ARTY 122* £2.99

Rock music has a sexist bias. Girls, it's always said, have a much tougher job getting to the top in a market where teenaged females, old-fashioned though it seems in these liberated days, prefer to fantasise about the opposite gender. Such simple rules did not apply to the popular music of earlier decades: the Twenties for example, when Adelaide Hall and Elisabeth Welch made their debuts. Both were born in New York; both settled down in Britain before World War II; both, amazingly enough, still go on singing. Their LPs are not reissues of vintage recordings but completely new.

The title of Adelaide Hall's LP is a reminder that her very first recording – in 1927 – was made with Duke Ellington's Orchestra, and that the Ellington band must have backed her up many times at the Cotton Club. One number from that early session, 'Creole Love Call', is included here, but brought up to date, with a guitarist and his wa-wa pedal re-creating Bubber Miley's trumpet solo. The slower pieces come off best, especially 'Sophisticated Lady', very warm and human. Elsewhere a few period touches creep in, even some frayed edges. But the August wears against us all, not just the girl who brought Ezra Pound his muffins.

Some, of course, fare better than others. Few singers can have worn more smoothly than Elisabeth Welch, still able to stand back from a song, to share it with the listener rather than submerge it. In a new version of 'When Lights Are Low' her voice sounds almost exactly as it did when she recorded the song with its composer, Benny Carter, in 1936, while 'Solomon', always a show-stopper, might have been sung in between a matinée and evening performance of *Nymph Errant*. Most tracks pinpoint the career – including 'Love For Sale', the song which Elisabeth Welch took over from a white girl singer in *The New Yorkers,* (the outraged moralists got the locale shifted too – from Madison to Harlem's Lenox Avenue). There's also the most believable performance on record of Nöel Coward's 'Twentieth Century Blues'.

Not long ago, Ella Fitzgerald took part in an American TV show which celebrated the triumph of black music. A small crisis blew up when she insisted that the biggest influence on her singing had not been Bessie Smith or even Ethel Waters but Connie Boswell. Very belatedly, Connie (she only began spelling it Connee many years later) is coming to be recognised as the other white female jazz singer – Mildred Bailey's place is already secure – who really mattered in the Thirties. The MCA LP, made up of original recordings, contains tracks by the Boswell Sisters, duets with Bing Crosby, and Connie on her own. Resemblances to Ella pop up all over the place, including 'Mr Freddie Blues' and 'Fare Thee, Honey, Fare Thee Well' (both singers favoured a bouncy, vaudeville-style approach to blues rather than anything ethnic or down-to-earth).

If you play Side Two of Maria Muldaur's LP immediately after the opening tracks of Connie Boswell's, the only really noticeable change is from mono to stereo, for 'We Just Couldn't Say Goodbye' could be mistaken for a recording by the Boswell Sisters. After that it scarcely comes as a shock to find Maria Muldaur echoing Mildred Bailey in 'Rockin' Chair'. Like several of her young contemporaries, she is an eclectic, operating in a variety of idioms – gospel and spiritual, folk, country-and-western – as well as periods, often with authority, always with brio.

Professionalism, of course, is one of Peggy Lee's strong points. Over the years, ever since the Forties, she has fashioned a highly lacquered but personal style, the sound distinctly feline. *Mirrors*, a song cycle by Jerry Leiber and Mike Staller, reflects the middle-aged experience of Middle America. Most of the time it avoids nostalgia, partly because Johnny Mandel's orchestrations can be acerbic as well as soothing, partly because Peggy Lee knows when to stay at a distance, when to move close in.

Phoebe Snow, on the other hand, has trouble spreading herself across an entire LP, even though her voice is attractive and individual, the vibrato uncommonly wide (maybe the outcome of an early enthusiasm for Sidney Bechet), with a fruity snarl reminiscent of Dinah Washington. Like all the singers mentioned so far her roots lie in jazz. It's obvious not only in 'No Regrets' (based on Billie Holiday's happy-sounding version) and a number from *Porgy and Bess,* but in her own songs, unassuming and likeable.

Patti Smith's reputation as a poet, her passion for Rimbaud, and the fact that she hangs out at the Chelsea Hotel (that's the one in Andy Warhol's interminable movie) have been seized upon by rock writers. One critic has hailed *Horses* as a finer first LP than those by the Beatles, the Stones and The Who. All very hard to live up to, particularly when, like Ms Smith, you have no voice and your musical surroundings are elementary rather than elemental. Which leaves those lyrics, full of skies splitting open and waves rolling in like radiant stallions. Patti Smith is doing no favours for a tradition which already takes in the folk poetry of the blues and Lorenz Hart's witty melancholy. Except, maybe, to give fresh meaning to the phrase 'rock bottom'.

Weekend Competition

No 2414 **Set by Spiro Keats**

Vernon Scannell's new book, reviewed by John Carey on page 717, has reawakened speculation on the relative merits of World War I and World War II poetry. Competitors are asked to confuse the issue further by devising 12-line samples of the poetry of World War III. May I suggest, incidentally, that you lay off the Bomb, poetic holocausts being generally rather vulgar and tiresome? By 11 June.

Result of No 2411
Set by Maud Gracechurch

Competitors were exhorted to rewrite nursery rhymes in the form of pop songs.

Report **by Vespasian**

This week's entry divulged, among other things, a scaldingly contemptuous view of the pop song – many submissions consisted merely of loutish brayings and bleatings (Jethro B. Tucket's was the finest of this genre). Also, competitors who stuck to nursery *rhythms* ('Jack and Jill went on the Pill', etc) failed to get lucky: far too galumphing for the songsters of today. £6 apiece.

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O Rain Man, abstain, man;
You're bombing my brain, man;
Don't start up again, man;
A saint would complain, man;
Would blow up his fane, man;
Be driven insane, man –
By the endless refrain, man,
Of your spluttering drain, man!

If you make it still wetter, you'll only
upset her;
She won't let me pet her – or, better still,
get her –

So wax not but wane, man;
As Rain Man, it's plain, man,
You're mainly a bane, man –
A full-bladder-pain, man . . .

KIT CARPENTER

I'm a dog and I belong to a girl called
Mother Hubbard.
He's a dog, he's a dog, he's a poor, poor, dog!
When I ask her for a bone and she opens up
her cupboard
He's a dog, he's a dog, he's a poor, poor, dog!
She aint got a bone, she aint got none!
Y-o-w-l!
I got no bone, – I'm a dawg!
Who's a dog? He's a dog!
I'm a dog, I'm a dog, I'm a dog, dog, dawg!
He's a dog-gone, – Y-O-W-L!
I'm a dog and I belong to a crone without
a bone.
I'm a dog. *He's a dog*. I'm a poor, poor,
dawg! Y-O-W-L!

JETHRO B. TUCKET

He sure could blow that horn, Yeah! Bestest
ever was born,
That's all he did, that sleepy kid,
When that boy blew, how the blue notes slid!
So blue-boy blow yo' horn, Yeah! Blue-boy
blow yo' horn.

Say, blue-boy hit them sounds, Yeah! Them
livestock's outa bounds,
That sheep makes jazz in the meadow grass,
The cow's in the corn an' she's havin' a gas!
So blue-boy blow yo' horn, Yeah! Blue-boy
blow yo' horn.

That blue-boy's gone to ground, Yeah! We
ain't seen him around,
He's hit the hay an' he'll sleep all day,
I ain't gonna wake that kid, no way!
'Cos he might cry 'til dawn, Yeah! An' he
won't blow no horn.

GERRY HAMILL

Little boy in blue jeans
I wanna blow your horn
Since I had you (in my dreams)
I don't need no porn
ographee
Can't you see
The kind of effect you have on me
I'm lying in the cornfield
Waiting for you
Leave your clouds of grass
Wake up boy blue – and love me
Love me do

LYNDON T. MOLE

Assiac

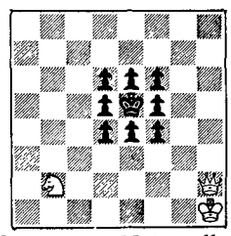
Chess Board

No 1383 **Bowled Over**

I am told that bowling alleys provide a particularly suitable holiday pastime at Whitsun; if that is so we could find some seasonal connotation in **A**, and anyway it is pretty to look at. It's a mate in four with three variations depending on Black's first move. Not really difficult, but no bargain either for 5 ladder-points; so to make up for it **B** (for 6) is quite ridiculously easy. No doubt, Black (to move) has some material as well as positional advantage, and White's winning chances would seem to be remote. Even so, Black is mated on the fifth move. So should we call it a sui in 5? We might, but we shouldn't thus dignify what is really a little joke. In **C** (for 7) we must save the space of a diagram; so put up the basic position and contrive for Black after a mere three moves to force a draw by perpetual. I took this from *Chess: Serious; for Fun*, an amusing collection of titbits by the Russian author *Birbrager*, and with some pretty cartoons too. It is published by *Chess* in Sutton Coldfield. **D** (for 8) is the traditional self-mate of holiday weekends: this one being a 'sui in 7'. For newcomers it should be explained that what matters is for White to commit suicide, as it were, by forcing Black to mate him in seven moves. Let's hope that this will gain further addicts for the gentle art of the self-mate. We've had quite a few over the years and decades, and some have turned out to be excellent composers.

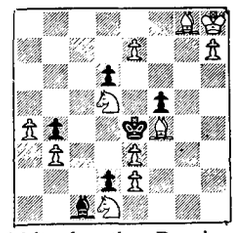
Now for some honest endgame studies, **E** (for 9) being a win achieved in about half a dozen moves. Quite a famous old beauty, and by way of a helpful hint let's think of a nice town in Middlesex called Pinner. **F** (for 10) is a veritable sacrificial orgy. White retaining a solitary pawn to inflict mate on the ninth move and in a position not too dissimilar to the 4-mover providing our headline, Black K 'bowled over.' Usual prizes, entries by 8 June.

A: J. Wainwright 1908

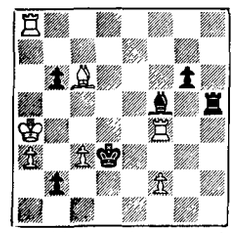


B. Expertus 1904

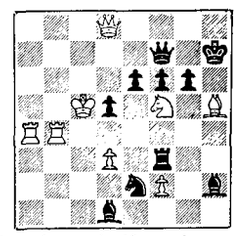
D: A. Decker 1908



E: Troitzky & Korolkov



F: C. Bayer 1856



Report on No 1380 *Set 30 April*

A: 18) . . .de:; **19) h3,ef:II** and White resigned in view of 20) hg:,Bd4†; 21) Kh2,fg:†; 22) Kg3:, Qg5!; etc.

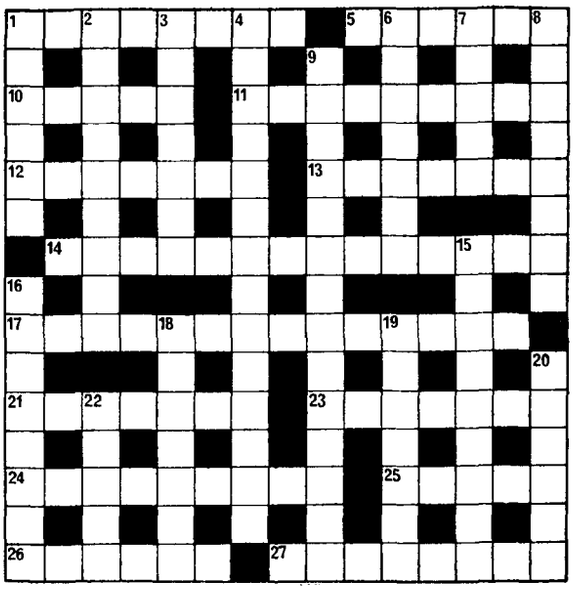
B: 1) Kte7†,Ke4 (best); **Bg6†,Ktg6:; 3) Ktf5!** etc.

C: 1) Ktc5,Ke3; 2) Kg1:! (Ktd3?,Kd3:; 3) Bf1 losing against . . . ef:=RI), **e1=Q†; 3) Kh2,Qh4†; 4) Kg1,Qe1†; 5) Kh2,Qd1; 6) Kte4,** =.

In **A** . . . Qb6 accepted. Prizes: C. Allen, D. Berdy, J. Gill, W. Georke, G. W. Richardson.

Weekend Crossword 1166

PRIZES: Book tokens of £2 for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Crossword 1166, New Statesman, Great Turnstile, London WC1V 7HJ, by first post 8 June.



ACROSS

1. See calf love ruined and forfeit prestige (4,4).
5. Made a cut and got some runs (6).
10. A woman in anger dares to strike back (5).
11. Change stole over the president (9).
12. Composer not entering the wrong time (7).
13. Nurses needed when one is found in a form of stress (7).
14. Gear for what batsmen and rugger players do (5,3,6).
17. Gorgeous creature of the standard advertisement is in the disguise of a bride (4,2,8).
21. There is room in one for an artist (7).
23. Filling up a hole for blasting (7).
24. Ringless the operatic hero would have to leave in the wrong litter (9).
25. Received as a name (5).
26. This is *comme il faut* in what to wear for imprisonment (6).
27. Store ice when it is melted? How mysterious! (8).

DOWN

1. Without shelter the vegetable would become something sticky (6).
2. The criminal is an unknown person about fifty (9).
3. Crazy when it is back in the money (7).
4. The priest gives an indication of the main directions (8,6).
6. Part of London which is otherwise in the drink (7).
7. Something like a ruff for a magistrate (5).
8. Disliked what may be done without trial (8).
9. Reasons which appear extraordinary inside cartoons (14).
15. The king is an entertainer, so it must be Henry (9).
16. Ex-schoolboy cursed freely, being dim (8).
18. Love parts include one for birds (7).
19. The fault lies with me in getting up weary (7).
20. Fungus which may be used for making a cigar (6).
22. Drink which is the opposite of princely (5).

SETSQUARE

Solution to No 1164

B	R	O	A	D	W	A	Y		F	R	E	S	C	O
R		L		E		L			E		A		V	
O	L	D	S	A	L	T	S		C	H	A	N	C	E
A		E		T		E		N		E		D		R
D	I	S	C	H	A	R	G	E		A	M	B	E	R
S		T			N		W		R		A		I	
			B	R	E	A	K	F	A	S	T	C	U	P
O		E		H		T		O		A		H		E
V	I	C	T	O	R	I	O	U	S	L	Y			
E		O		D		V		N				N		G
R	A	N	G	E		E	L	D	E	R	W	I	N	E
A		O		S		S		L		U		T		N
L	I	M	P	I	D		N	A	R	R	O	W	E	D
L		I		A			N		A		I		E	
S	E	C	O	N	D		I	D	O	L	A	T	E	R

Prizewinners to No 1164

Mrs J. Loutz (France)
Eugene Stratton (Clacton)
Dr. G. Yudkin (Dar es Salaam)

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Melbourne, Australia

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Information on application procedure and further particulars may be obtained from the Academic Registrar, Monash University, Clayton, Victoria, 3168, Australia, or the Secretary General, Association of Commonwealth Universities (Appts), 36 Gordon Square, London WC1H 0PF.

Applications should reach the Academic Registrar not later than 30 June 1976. The Council reserves the right to make no appointment or to appoint by invitation at any stage.

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GENTLEMAN, young 60s, widower, seeks companionship of educated, physically mature lady, 45-55. Cottage Devon, car owner/driver. Box 4130.

OXON/NORTHANTS but not rooted, widow 47, daughter 9, intd politics, Visconti, Vivaldi, theatre, exotic hols seeks compatible prof. man young 50s for new life. No slippers by fireside. Box 4131.

PROFESSIONAL WOMAN, div., Londoner, just retired, young in heart, intd arts, outdoor pursuits, travel, seeks unattached man, 55+. Box 4133.

FEMALE LECTURER, 31, tall, attractive, sense of humour, interested in literature, art, travel, gardening & cookery, living in North East, wonders if there is somewhere a normal, unattached man of over thirty who would like to make her acquaintance and perhaps become a friend. Box 4134.

SURELY, THERE HAS TO BE just one She-Person in Britain/Europe (age, shape, etc., largely immaterial), now ripe for living, loving? 'Scholar-gypsy' has much of both in view, would gladly share – provided she, too, is: loving, warm, honest, sweet, funny, pleasantly carnal, and slightly mad. I suggest summer holiday together (home/abroad), then explore life, the world, one another, – tenderly, joyfully, thankfully, indefinitely. Box 4143.

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WHAT ARE YOU DOING THIS SUMMER? Indian professional man, mid-thirties, recently divorced, is optimistic enough to hope that he will meet someone nice and attractive. Box 4172.

MALE CELTIC Nationalist sks. f. with similar interests for relationship. Box 4199.

INDIAN MALE, 37, well educated, independent,car-owner, lives London. Interests: art, music, cinema, nature. Wishes meet sincere lady for friendship/marriage. Box 4211.

DIVORCEE of 6 yrs standing and very tired of living solo (except for children and other assorted animals), approach to housework rather casual so lifestyle definitely not very Sanderson nor very Ideal Home, would like to contact like minded male 40 plus who also needs to be needed and believes that people take precedence over possessions. Box 4102.

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SURGEON'S DAUGHTER, young 57, wishes to meet man, similar age, for friendship, hoping further lasting relationship might develop. Box 4121.

IS THERE A PROFESSIONAL male, 40s, possibly Gemini, unattached emotionally & legally, who would like to meet up with an Aquarian female, 42, outskirts London, for honest and open relationship. Box 4122.

NICE, intelligent, adventurous woman, 55, lifelong sexual inhibitions, seeks contemporary man in similar predicament, for mutual encouragement, friendship. Wolves no use. Box 4123.

SURREY OR NEAR. Co. Director, 30s, well-spoken, educated, seeks attractive, romantic lady, 21-40. Box 4124.

MAN, never-married, 36, Yugoslav-born, non-smoker, likes home life, nature, seeks never-married, decent, attractive lady, for marriage. Box K754, Haymarket, 2000, Australia.

EX-CONTINENTAL, tall, attract. teacher, f, 40, son 16, sks healthy, intell. estab. man for marriage. SW England. Box 4160.

ATTRACTIVE, REFINED, unattached lady, youthful 52, no ties, affectionate, sincere, good listener, varied interests, seeks that 'Special Someone' 46+ for permanent relationship. Box 4085.

MARRIED businessman, London, formerly CO, internat. ints, extrovert, warm personality, loves England, life, people, wld like meet congenial lady 35/50 for sharing activities & friendship. Box 4149.

FEMININE FEMALE, 39, pleasant appearance, tired of going solo, wld like meet gentleman 40s for perm. relationship/marriage. Mids. or N. West pref. Box 4158.

PROFESSIONAL MAN, 50, div., S. London, seeks child-loving, cultured female, mid-thirties, for companionship, outings, driving, travel, & help amuse two children boy & girl under 8, on access visits. Box 4176.

FEMALE ARTS GRADUATE, divorced, 33, loving and attractive, wide interests, seeks warm relationship with man, possibly love and marriage. Southern England. Box 4175.

THE NOBLEST MIND the best contentment has. Imaginative prof. man seeks lady under 50 who may also find fulfilment difficult going solo. East Midlands. Box 4200.

LADY, 46, no ties, div., own house, car, job, would like male companion, kind, genial, outgoing, who enjoys driving, dining out, theatre, concerts, etc. Box 4202.

ATTRACTIVE, lively, separated f. (40), living in Norfolk backwater, interested in theatre, arts, sks intelligent male companion similar age & circumstances. Box 4201.

WIDELY-TRAVELLED, attractive with sense of humour, professional f. late 30s, enjoys cooking/entertaining theatre/music, country life. Would like to meet gentleman to share some of these interests pref. between ages 38-48 yrs. Box 4132.

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NEW STATESMAN
Vol. 91 No. 2358

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Theatres

THE ALMOST FREE presents 'The Non-Stop Connolly Cycle,' by Margaretta D'Arcy and John Arden. 14 self-contained episodes, 1 per day, on the life of James Connolly, the Irish Socialist. Readings with music and songs at 1.15 p.m. daily. 485 6224.

CHICHESTER. 0243 86333. 27, 29 May at 2.0 & 7.0, 28 May, 3 June at 7.0, 5 June at 2.0 'Noah'; Prev. 31 May at 7.0, 1, 2, 4, 5 June at 7.0, 3 June at 2.0 'Twelfth Night'.

HAMPSTEAD THEATRE. 722 9301. 'Dom Juan', by Molière. Nightly at 8 p.m., Sats 5 & 8. Tickets £1.75, £1. Students 75p.

LYTTELTON (New National Theatre) 928 2252. Fri. at 7 'Hamlet', – uncut text runs 4 hrs. Sat. at 2.30 & 7.45, Mon. at 7.45 'Watch It Come Down'. Thurs. 2.30 & 7.45 'Playboy of the Western World'. Over 100 excellent £1 seats on sale day of perf.

ROYAL COURT. 730 1745. Beckett Season. Evs at 8, Sat. 5 & 8.30 'Play' and other plays.

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VANBRUGH THEATRE CLUB. 2-5 June Sean O'Casey: 'The Shadow of a Gunman'. Details RADA, 62 Gower St, London WC1. 636 7076.

Concert

EMPEROR ENSEMBLE OF LONDON, (Purcell Room) Royal Festival Hall, Sat. 5 June at 7.30 p.m. Christopher Taylor, Richard West, John Barnett, Wendy Philips, Ian Herbert, Ian Harper and Naomi Davidov. Music by Jean-Michel Damase, Christopher Taylor, Mozart, Janacek, Frank Cordell and Poulenc. Tickets: £1.25, £1.00, 75p. Box Office 01-928 3191.

Poetry

'BLOOMSDAY' Reading in honour of James Joyce, with Paddy Joyce (James Joyce's nephew). Patrick Reilly & Patricia Levinton reading from 'Ulysses', 'Dubliners' & Joyce's letters to Nora. Also young Irish poets, Augustus Young & Matthew Sweeney. Sun. 6 June, 7.45 p.m., Wine Bar, King's Arms Pub, Sloane Sq., SW1. Adm. 50p. Students 30p. OAPs, 20p. Inq. phone 730 1885, Organiser.

Exhibitions

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Meetings

BRITAIN AND IMMIGRATION. A series of lectures, films and discussions arranged by the Runnymede Trust at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, The Mall, SW1. Tuesday 1 June 7 p.m. 'Immigration into Britain': the Development of Immigration and Race Law'. Speaker: Larry Grant, lecturer at the University of Kent. Chairman: Lord Avebury. Admission 50p public, 35p ICA members and students.

TIBET SOCIETY OF THE UK, 46 Belgrave Square, SW1. 01-235 3720. Open 10 a.m. - 6 p.m. Mon.-Thur., Sat. Callers welcome. Meetings on all aspects of Tibetan civilisation, Buddhism, etc. Full details of facilities, crafts, etc. on request.

JACQUES RIGAUD, Sous-Directeur général de l'UNESCO, will give a lecture on 'Présent et avenir de la culture' on Wednesday 2 June at 6.15 p.m. at the French Institute, Queensberry Place, London SW7. tel: 01-589 6211 ext. 38. Admission free.

CENTRAL LONDON FABIAN SOCIETY. Boris Kuerryavfiv, 1st Secretary at USSR Embassy, on 'Comicon and the European Community'. 7.30 p.m. 2 June, 5 Tavistock Place, WC1. Collection: all welcome.

SOCIALIST MEDICAL ASSOCIATION. Head Office from 1 June is at 11 Dartmouth St, London SW1H 9BN. tel: 01-839 7632. Celebrate return to London on Sat. 5 June 3 p.m. Cole Room, 11 Dartmouth St, SW1. Tickets 50p including tea.

AFRICA CENTRE: Buchi Emecheta, Nigerian novelist, on her new book 'The Bride-Price'. Tues. 1 June 6.30 p.m. 'Women in Muslim Communities'; Panel discussion, Wed. 2 June 6.30 p.m. Adm. 40p, students 25p. 38 King St. WC2.

FUNDING AND INITIAL STEPS for establishing community projects of any kind. Seminar, Sat. 5 June 1-5 p.m., led by Ed Berman, Bruce Galley and David Powell. Inter-Action Advisory Service, 14 Talacre Rd, NW5. 01-267 1422. £1 per head. Book in advance if possible.

ADLERIAN SOCIETY. 'Techniques of Adlerian Therapy': Hertha Orgler (Author: 'Alfred Adler, the Man and his Work – Triumph over the Inferiority Complex', paperback 1975). Tuesday 1 June 7.30 p.m. Alliance Hall, Palmer St, SW1. Visitors welcome. 20p. Students 10p.

THEODOR HERZL SOCIETY. At Hannah Karminski House, 9 Adamson Rd, NW3 (side entrance ground-floor hall), Tues. 1 June 8.15 p.m. The Hon. Terence Prittie MBE, 'The Challenges Confronting Israel'.

ENP. 28 May, Walsall North, Hansford-Miller, John Stonehouse, 7.30 p.m. 1 June, Canterbury Protest 11 a.m. 4 June, Rotherham by-election meeting YMCA 7.30 p.m. 5/6 June, Riverside Festival, St. Neots.

UNIVERSAL MEDITATION based on Yoga of Bhagavad Gita, conducted by Swami Avyaktananda (Chairman Vedanta Movement). 13 Elsenham Street, Southfields, London SW18. (Bus 39; Southfields Underground Station). Tuesdays, 7 p.m. 1 June The Battle within Man; 15 June Inner Freedom and Peace; 29 June Yoga of Universality; 13 July Meditation and Daily Life. Lectures will be followed by Seven-step Meditation. Freewill offerings.

RAMAKRISHNA VEDANTA CENTRE, 54 Holland Pk, W11. Sun. 30 May 5 p.m. Swami Ritajananda of our French Centre on 'Science and Vedanta'. Wed. meeting at 6.45 p.m. All welc. Vedanta mag. 40p.

BUDDHIST SOCIETY, 58 Eccleston Square, London SW1. Tues. 3 June 6.30 p.m. 'Introducing Buddhism'. All welcome. Send s.a.e. for full programme.

THEOSOPHY. Public Talk & Questions. Sun. 30 May 8 p.m. 'The Power of Altruism'. S.a.e. for programme, book list & literature. ULT. 62 Queen's Gdns. W2.

Courses

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